

ROYAL COMMISSION ON SYSTEMS OF ELECTION.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

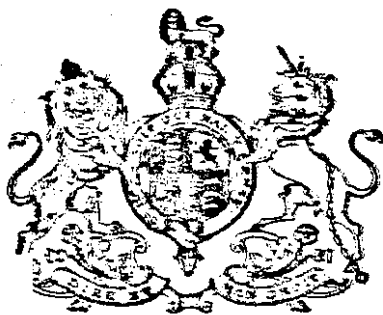
TAKEN BEFORE THE

ROYAL COMMISSION

ON

SYSTEMS OF ELECTION.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



LONDON:

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1911

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1. (*Chairman*.) You are Chairman of the Committee of the Proportional Representation Society?—I am.

2. The Commission are in possession of the memorandum which you have drawn up, and I think it would be most convenient if you put that in as evidence, but it will be necessary perhaps in one or two instances to rather alter the wording of it, as it is not in a form actually to be taken as evidence. I think we might ask you some general questions before going through this memorandum in detail?—The memorandum is not drawn up as a paper to be put in and printed as it stands. It is not fitted for that purpose. It is really a brief or an abstract from which I thought I could give evidence in answer to questions founded on that brief. Unless the Commissioners decide otherwise I would submit to them that that is really a convenient mode of procedure.

3. We wish rather to suit your convenience?—What I would also press upon the Commission is this: The question of proportional representation has now passed out of the sphere of craziness, to which it was at one time supposed to belong, and it has attracted attention more or less all over the world. For instance, the last news we have is that a Select Committee has been appointed in the House of Commons of Canada on the subject. After some debate the Ministry agreed to the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the whole question of proportional representation. What I think is, that the Inquiry being made by this Commission will be studied in our Colonies and abroad as well as at home, and it is well to take it in a serious and even in an ample way. I do not want to flood the Commission with evidence on details, but, at the same time, I would put it to the Commissioners that you cannot very well slur it over now.

4. You suggest that we should go through this summary or memorandum?—Yes, and using it as a barrister's brief, ask me questions upon it.

5. There are a certain number of preliminary or leading questions I should like to ask. First of all, are you quite convinced of the desirability of a change in the present electoral system?—I am, and have been for a good many years.

6. You do not think the present system in practice really secures the representation of every important section of the community?—No, I do not think it does

of every section; but still more am I convinced that it does not represent anything like a real and trustworthy representation of their strength.

7. How do you mean?—They may have casual representation, but not adequate representation, and even the leading divisions I think now, as is confessed by everybody, are mostly misrepresented.

8. You do not think the creation of representations from all sections will tend to introduce a system of groups into Parliament?—I think the introduction of groups, as a matter of fact, exists already, and is an essential development of democratic institutions; but the groups within Parliament will not interfere in any serious way with the maintenance of the two great groups in Parliament (more or less loosely formed of those subsidiary groups), which will maintain their present relations for a long time to come, if not for ever, for as long as there is the two-party system. It will be modified and seriously modified, and its rigidity will be a good deal modified, but the two-party system really exists in the fundamental conditions of human nature, and will survive all your changes of form, although you will have greater liberty.

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[Continued.]

mainly on the Continent. Their prepossessions and habits, and ways of thinking, have led them to adopt that almost universally on the Continent; but here, and in our Colonies and in America, English people have gone in for the single vote, which gives much greater freedom to the individual, while at the same time preserving the power of party associations, so far as they are real things. On the Continent, where the parties put out their two lists, party organisation and party domination have been, so far, very much kept up there by that method. It involves a good deal of manoeuvring to adjust the composition of the list for a particular party as to where different people shall come in it. If you are going to put up for a big town like Manchester a Conservative list, a Liberal list, and a Labour list, there will be an immense caucus in manoeuvring with regard to the arrangement of places on the lists. Those who come on the top are the first to be elected.

11. In actual practice, does not your system lend itself to party caucus organisation?—Not at all; it allows it to work, but does not lend itself to it, and does not support it. The great merit of the single transferable vote is this: The party organisers cannot say to the voter: "Unless you vote in the order in which we say, and for the persons in the position we indicate, your votes are lost." What they can and will say with force, is this: "Vote for the members of your party in any order you like; use your own freedom of choice as to the order in which they come, but go on voting for them until you have voted for all of them. Then when the counting comes, the strength of the party will be gradually drawn together or diffused, so that in the end the whole strength will be found concentrated on the number of persons we can carry. Those persons will be found out by the action of the individual voters as indicated on their papers, and not by our directions beforehand." For instance, take the test elections we have had. You put out a list of different candidates, not as party candidates. The Liberal electors will be exhorted to vote for the Liberal candidates. In the last election Mr. Asquith came out with a very great number. It did not matter how many or how few voted for him, provided that, if it was a great number, they went on voting for other people, so that the surplus might be passed on; and if there was a small number, it did not matter how few, provided they went on to indicate their second, third, and fourth preferences. So that in the event of a person being found to be out of the running by the marking of the papers by the wills of the individual electors, the forces of the party are brought together and concentrated upon exactly the number of people they can carry. There is no embarrassment in considering beforehand how many you can put up, because you cannot put up so many as to injure your chance of getting in the number you need. You can put up how many or how few you like if the voters go on marking their papers so that when the counting comes, the strength of the association may be brought together and concentrated on the number of candidates you can carry.

12. You do not anticipate any serious inconvenience from the different parties drawing up lists much in the same way as they used to in the old School Board elections?—No, for this reason. In the School Board election you had 15 persons to be returned for Manchester. The Church party in Manchester wanted to put out a list. They did not know how many they could carry. They thought perhaps they could carry five, and they put out a list of five, and they found in the end they could only carry three—taking a hypothetical number. They might have carried four, but by putting out five, they scattered their forces so as to bring them down below what they could really carry. It is only by experimenting beforehand, and registering the result of previous elections, that party managers are able to find out as to different sections what their relative strengths were, and so could put out a reasonable contingent of candidates. Then in order to carry that contingent they had to direct their electors to vote in particular fashion, so that the whole strength should not be wasted. For instance, having 15 candidates,

supposing they could carry four, you cannot divide 15 by 4. One section would vote for A, B, and C, and another for B, C, and D, and so on, changing the particular combination, so that in the end the whole of their party votes would get equally distributed amongst the four, though they could not in the case of individual voters divide their 15 votes among four.

13. At present one of the advantages of our system is the close connection between the constituency and the representative. In large—four, five, or six member constituencies—that connection must necessarily be diminished?—Yes.

14. You do not see any disadvantage in that?—No, I do not. A man would be one of the members for Manchester, or Birmingham, or Liverpool. His programme or principles would be known, and he would be supported more enthusiastically probably than now by people of his way of thinking, or of his opinions, or his prepossessions, throughout the whole of his constituency, and his committee men would be working for him very zealously socially, and he would be associated with them. He would know something of the other electors, too, no doubt, and a corporate feeling would spring up, and there would be as keen an association as ever, if not a keener, between the man elected and a certain number of electors.

15. But he would not be so closely identified with any particular locality?—He would not be so closely identified with everybody in Manchester, for example, but he would be closely identified with, say, the Free Traders of Manchester, or, say, the Labour men of Manchester, or, say, the cotton spinners of Manchester, or any other particular interest that was eager to get a representation, and thought their voice ought to be heard at Westminster—he would be closely associated with them. There would undoubtedly be committees formed in all these different constituencies, which would be in close contact with the particular candidate they favoured.

16. Before going on to your memorandum, one of the questions I wanted to ask you was about the single vote system inaugurated by Mr. Hare, and the reasons why you now suggest a considerable modification of that system. I understand the Hare system was for a national constituency. What caused you to drop that idea and take to the smaller or more local idea?—I consider myself a very conservative practical man, and I proceed from the known to the unknown by moderate steps. I am not prepared at once to go Mr. Hare's length in view, among other things, of its slight chance of success.

17. You dropped that because of practical difficulties?—I do not know that we should ever reach that. I do know that what I propose seems to be quite feasible and quite practicable, and if it proves to be the great success that we believe it will, it can go on. If people are so disposed and find themselves so educated they can go on, and if you have a constituency of three members side by side with another constituency of three or five members, you may add them together. For instance, if we started in London we should not start with London as one constituency; we should cut it up perhaps into 10 or fewer constituencies. Then the adjacent constituencies might, if it was found desirable, be joined gradually together and so on. A friend of mine, who is very keenly interested in London, and knows London very well, even now desires London to be made one constituency. As a practical man, I think that would have no chance of adoption, and it is really a wild thing to suggest. But let us proceed from the constituency of Westminster to the constituency of Chelsea, the constituency of Marylebone, and the constituency of Kensington, and perhaps by and-by you might unite them into one.

18. (Sir Francis Hopwood.) What is the minimum—five-member constituencies?—No, three will be the minimum.

19. (Lord Loches.) What would you make the maximum?—I would not like to limit it. I would like to know how far my friends would go with me. I will go as far as they go. My notion would be to take at present the natural units of provincial and local life—the big towns for example—and make each

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LORD COURTNEY OF PENWITH.

[Continued.]

big town a unit. I would not do that with London because I think it is too big, but I think I would do it with Manchester, and, if local jealousies were not too strong, throw Manchester and Salford into one; but probably they would not be satisfied. Glasgow would probably be a little difficult to deal with, but Glasgow with the adjacent burghs, which are not now part of Glasgow, would form a very magnificent and well-educated constituency, and I would like to see it tried there on a large scale. How far I would go would depend on how far I could persuade Ministers to go, and how far they would go would depend upon how far the House of Commons would go with them, and that would depend probably upon how far this Commission go in their Report.

20. Do you consider you would get better proportional results, the larger the constituencies?—Yes, I would not say up to an indefinite extension; but I would go up to 15 without any hesitation.

21. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) The question of degree is very important. How far would you go as regards size?—I do not myself shrink from sizes which some may think hazardous. The better educated your constituency, and the more compact your electorate, the larger can your constituency be.

22. Does not the question of how far the minorities are to be represented a great deal turn upon the size of your constituencies. Was not it the ideal of Mr. Hare that small diffused bodies, if intelligent people, might group themselves together over very large areas, and so get a representation?—No doubt.

23. But if you confine it to a constituency returning five or six men, will not their chance be proportionately diminished?—Yes, I think it is a practical mode of procedure. I think the Hare Bill idea is a very magnificent idea for the future, in which you can get 1/700th part of the electorate represented. It is an easy way of solution. But I am quite content myself with a scheme which would give 1/16th of the electorate the power of returning a member. I think that would secure for the present, at all events to start with, an adequate representation of minorities. You would get it more and more adequate the further you go.

24. In the case of rural districts you restrict them to three members?—I do not restrict them to three.

25. You speak of a minimum, which one would suppose would apply to rural districts for geographical reasons?—Possibly.

26. Would it not be the case that no minority of less than about 26 or 27 per cent. of the population would be likely to get representation?—That would be a great improvement on what exists now.

27. But is it such an improvement as to make the change very valuable?—I think extremely valuable.

28. Take the case of the Unionists in Catholic Ireland. It is stated now that in the Nationalist part of Ireland, the Unionist minority has no chance of representation at all?—That is stated, but is also denied.

29. To an outsider they do not appear to return many members. But if you only grouped two or three constituencies together, would they even then have any chance?—I believe, in Ireland, if we grouped constituencies together, we would get in some parts Unionists elected. Certainly, in Belfast you would get Nationalist members, and in Dublin Unionist members. Possibly in Cork you might get a Unionist member. There has always been a strong Unionist minority in Cork. But you must remember there are Nationalists and Nationalists, and you would get different shades of Nationalists being returned—those who are more practicable in their political actions, and those who are more disposed to compromise, and those who are less disposed. To break down the organisation of the Nationalist Party as a unit would be a very considerable advance in the emancipation of Ireland. Moreover, there has existed in Ireland in the past, as we know from the electoral history of Ireland before 1885, what we call Whigs, who got their inns and their seats in the counties in the south and west as well as in the north; Whigs in the north, Whigs in Leinster, Whigs even in Munster, were elected. They have had no encouragement since 1885 and 1886, and they are apt to die down like other

plants which do not get access to air and light, and almost disappear; but the germs are there, the people are there, and they can be called together. You have authority for what I am saying in Mr. Birrell, who, when he drew up his scheme for the government of Ireland, expressed certain despair of obtaining the representation of a minority in any scheme of representation, and he introduced nominated members in order to supply what he could not get through the process of an election. But I know people whose acquaintance with Ireland has been longer and more intimate than Mr. Birrell's, who believe that minority members and Unionist members could be secured even now in Ireland—even in Connaught they are to be found.

30. Does not that go to show that the question of degree and the size of your groups will be very, very important?—It is important. I do not in the least underrate its importance. I only want the ground to be cleared in order to get on to that. I throw my cards on the table. I am proposing what I hope may be accepted. I believe if it is accepted it will prove so good and so excellent that the ideas of the next generation, if not the present generation, will become enlarged, and they will say, "We must allow this system to spread."

31. (*Lord Loches.*) Our reference directs us to inquire into schemes which have been adopted or proposed in order to secure a fuller representative character. The more full the representation the better for Ireland?—Yes.

32. Therefore, the question of numbers seems to me, as Mr. Reeves has said, very important?—Yes; but you must remember what kind of representation you get under other schemes. It is all a question of comparison. What do you get now? What would you get under a limited vote, if that were introduced; what under cumulative voting; what under a list system; what under a single transferable vote system? It is all a question of comparison.

33. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) I venture to deduce from what you have said that you would contemplate a minimum of three, and possibly in the case of some big cities, a maximum even as high as nine. You did not commit yourself to it, but it sounded like it?—I should be ready to go to that; but if you look at foreign countries, which, after all, may be a guide to what is practicable, you find on the Continent constituencies returning much larger numbers. In Belgium, I think, the biggest constituency numbers 22. In Finland, there is a constituency, not, one would suppose, a highly educated constituency, returning 23 members, and the election is conducted with such accuracy as to out-do our present methods. Two elections have taken place there these last two years almost without a change in the composition of the elected members.

34. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The election took some time?—It took time.

35. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) But very careful arrangements are made outside amongst the parties and groups?—I think not. There are groups there. The candidates are put out in groups, Old Finns and New Finns, and Swedes, and what not.

36. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Your general notion would be to have several large constituencies, based on what one may call natural considerations as to area, differing widely from each other in the population and number of electors, and returning different numbers of representatives, and you would make the representation fair by adjusting the number of representatives roughly to the number either of the electors or of the population. That would be your general notion?—Quite so.

37. Would you base the representation on electors or on population? Have you any preference?—Very little preference. My own feeling is always in favour of electors, because they are the men we have to deal with, but you must have regard to the composition of your society. Your reference is to have regard to the electorate.

38. Yes, the existing electorate?—There are many reasons for bringing in population when the existing electorate varies very diversely from the variation of population, but if you get two constituencies whose

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proportion to one another in respect of population differs very much from the proportion of the electorate, you have to inquire why that difference exists, and the causes of that distinction in order to determine your allocation in respect of electorate, or in respect of members. I do not think it is an important question, and my prepossession is to take the electorate as a basis.

39. You would begin with large areas of election. We are precluded from going into any scheme of redistribution for obvious reasons. How would you deal with Wales, for instance?—Wales presents two or three places, Cardiff is one, Merthyr Tydfil another, where you could get large, practically urban areas returning a multiplicity of members, and you could get other adjacent counties and join them together so as to form some constituencies to return three members.

40. The object being, I understand, that in each group of representatives of constituencies there should be some representatives of the minority in the constituency. Would that be so?—I do not like the phrase "the minority."

41. Minority or minorities?—I want some representation of the constituency as full as possible of the constituency and the different elements of the electorate: that is what I want. Of course redistribution is a very practical question, and would have to be proceeded upon with a very minute knowledge and study of the different parts of the country. You will get a very great deal of light on the question of redistribution from the practice of other countries, where they run up to 22 or 23 members and run down to three. Even in Sweden, in the north, under their scheme they are going to have a single member constituency in a very wide and sparsely inhabited part of the country.

42. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You do not advocate the single-member constituency for the transferable voting?—You cannot have a transferable vote to give a representation to different elements with a single-member constituency. You must take at least three if you are going to get different elements in your constituency represented. You can get a single transferable vote in a single-member constituency in order to secure that the person elected shall get the majority of the votes.

43. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) If all sections are to be represented in proportion to their numbers, the larger the constituency the more nearly you attain that ideal?—Yes, in Mr. Hare's system with one constituency you have the ideal in its fullest form.

44. Take Ireland, for instance. Grouping constituencies in three will give you a smaller representation of minorities than if you made the whole of Ireland into one single constituency?—Yes, that is true.

45. It is very important?—But is the question of making Ireland one constituency a practical question?

46. Do you regard Mr. Hare's scheme as the ideal, and yours as a step towards the ideal, or do you regard a half-way house between your scheme and Mr. Hare's scheme as the ideal?—"Ideal" is a very long word. I think Mr. Hare's scheme is an ideal which I should not be at all afraid of moving forward to, but one step is enough for me. I go passing gradually on, and the next generation will go a little further, and they will find their way. Accepting it in an elementary form does not commit you to anything in future, and if that proves itself by experience to be a thing to which you can move forward safely with the perfect stability of your institutions, then, with the education of your people, with the development of their character, with an increased power of political action and political choice, you can go on, and you will go on, and by-and-bye you may get Ireland one and even more than Ireland one constituency. With respect to Ireland, may I observe this: you think of Ireland with three-member constituencies as not giving complete representation to different parts of Ireland, and of course it would not. But, as I said before, there are Nationalists and Nationalists, and if you get your single transferable vote in the three-member constituency in Ireland, you would get, supposing they were all Nationalists returned, Nationalists of different character returned, and if you

got two Nationalists and one Unionist you would get two Nationalists of different character returned.

47. I quite agree; but still if we get Mr. Hare's scheme we get the abolition of localities altogether. It is entirely a numerical representation of the country?—I should not like to say that. If you are going for ideals do not speak of it as a numerical representation of the country. I should call it a human representation of the country. You are endeavouring to give the whole community of sentient human beings, so far as you are going to give them the vote, their share. That is the ideal.

48. My point is that you treat the whole country as one, and not different localities as returning members?—Surely all these things are arbitrary. Let us get out of the chains of thought which proceed to this as necessary parts of humanity.

49. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You would make your electoral areas as large as is practically possible?—That is so, watching very carefully every step of the advance.

50. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) But I take it you would be glad to see the system applied in the first instance to big cities, leaving the question of the large county areas to be settled after redistribution?—That is a practical question. Personally, I should be prepared to accept the experiment on a reduced scale, but a good many of my friends do not like that expression of opinion on my part at all. I am prepared to go forward even on a moderate application of the principle, but I think a restricted application provokes a good deal of dislike and discontent. For example, in Tasmania it was applied to Hobart Town and Launceston, and not to the country. Hobart Town and Launceston got several members, and the country was divided into single member constituencies. The country voters thought they had not got the same electoral power as the others, and there was a good deal of jealousy, whereas, as a fact, it was one man one vote wherever it was. But that jealousy was raised. I do not want to raise any jealousy of that kind. Even in Belgium there was a good deal of difficulty between town and country. There is no difficulty in applying it throughout, although you could not have constituencies with so many members in the country as in the town.

51. I was merely following what you called your conservative line of thought, and having regard to the fact that we cannot go into any large system of redistribution, I was anxious to know whether you would be glad to see your scheme applied to such places as Leeds and Manchester, where the redistribution would be infinitesimal. You would merely have to throw the net a little wider and destroy the one-member constituencies and take the number of members, whatever it may be at present, representing the particular city?—I do not know. I should like to be informed as to the view of the Commission about their powers in respect of redistribution.

52. (*Chairman.*) I may say I do not think it comes at all within our terms of reference to recommend redistribution?—Not any scheme?

53. We recognise that any scheme practically, which suggests any minority representation, involves redistribution?—I do not for a moment conceive that it is a part of your duty to draw up an electoral map of the country for the future, but if you are going to make any suggestion at all, you must accept this proposition: that if you are going to apply in any degree proportional representation, so far as it is applied we must have constituencies for three or more members.

54. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Redistribution is a condition precedent to the adoption of your proposal in any form?—Quite so. You are not, therefore, debarred from considering the point.

55. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) You say in your memorandum that a single vote is a form of proportional representation. Does that mean if plural voting were abolished without any other changes it would be the beginning of proportional representation?—No, I do not think so at all. The abolition of the plural vote, leaving constituencies as they stand now, would have nothing to do with proportional representation.

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56. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You have thought of this scheme more in connection with big towns than with rural constituencies?—I cannot say that. I was member for a rural constituency myself for 20 years.

57. Do you anticipate no more difficulty in a rural constituency in applying this than in an urban constituency?—Of course the areas are different. That is the point. To get a rural constituency with seven or nine members you would have generally a very inconvenient area, at least for beginners, and, therefore, one would have a constituency of a smaller range. But most counties could be easily manipulated. My own county of Cornwall, I think, could be made one constituency without much difficulty. It could easily be made into two three-member constituencies.

58. (*Lord Locke.*) Including the boroughs?—There is only one borough, and that will disappear whenever any real redistribution comes.

59. Generally, you would not hesitate to throw county and town together?—No, certainly not. The distinction between them is quite out of date.

60. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You do not attach any importance to the difference of habit between rural and urban electors with regard to reading?—So far as that exists it would tell in the way they voted and in the results finally reached, but there would be no confusion arising from the fact that you get electors of different habits and different ways of thinking brought together to consider a longish list of candidates and to choose for themselves amongst them. You get your rural elector, even if he is very different character from your urban elector, voting for his neighbour in the country possibly, and the urban elector voting very likely for his friend in the town; but you will get no confusion.

61. Do you think he would vote with the same readiness as he does now?—Yes.

62. There would be no difficulty at all in getting him to vote?—No, not at all.

63. (*Chairman.*) You do not recommend any scheme of compulsory voting such as they have under the list system in Belgium?—No.

64. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) I understand you think it would stimulate the formation of groups of the electors?—I do not know that I used the word "stimulate," but probably groups would come into existence. They exist now.

65. You referred just now to the Tasmanian experiment. There were, of course, two elections each in Hobart Town and Launceston, and there was also one general election for the Federal Parliament over the whole of Tasmania. Is it not the case that in the case of this one general election the whole of the candidates who were returned both for the Senate and the House of Representatives, would have been returned if there had been no transferable vote, and no second and third preference vote?—I am not aware of that, but even if it is so, I venture to say it proves nothing. It would not have existed under the ordinary system. The single vote might easily bring out that, because there was no great preference for any particular candidate. You might easily bring out the fact that your six senators elected in Tasmania were the six who came out top at the first shot. But those six would not have come out at the top under the ordinary method of election. If each person had six votes and was able to give one a piece to six candidates, then the majority would have returned the whole six; whereas by each person having only one vote, and indicating that one vote, you get six people brought in representing six different combinations, and it was because they were so evenly divided beforehand that there was no necessity for transfer, as you say. That might easily happen.

66. But I am working up to something rather different. You told us a little while ago that it really would not matter in a grouped constituency whether people voted for their candidates in any particular order or not; it was just the same, for instance, whether Mr. Asquith got a first-preference vote, and Mr. Lloyd George a second-preference vote in your imaginary constituency. But is it not the case that the first preference is the question? Whether a man gets a first-preference vote or a second-preference vote

is very important, and does not the number of first-preference votes he gets affect his chance very considerably?—It indicates that he is a leading favourite, but another may ultimately come in before him, though he has a larger number of first-preference votes.

67. Is it not the fact that in the case of six men being found to have their quota of first-preference votes they are at once declared elected?—Certainly.

68. Is not the tendency then, on the part of supporters, to give their first-preference votes—to lump them or give them—to the candidates they prefer?—I do not follow the reasoning. I see no difficulty in it. Will you condescend to give examples, and I shall understand you?

69. Supposing you have a constituency returning six men?—Six senators for Tasmania, say?

70. A certain party wishes six men to be elected for those vacancies?—A party?

71. A party. As regards each individual man, is it not a matter of considerable importance to him whether he gets a larger amount of first-preference votes or a larger amount of second or third-preference votes, and does not it affect his chance very much?—When the transfers come to be made, if it lies between the six candidates for that party who will not all get in, the man who gets the lowest number of first-preference votes will be the man first sacrificed, and they would be transferred to the others.

72. Will not the party managers, instead of telling the people it does not matter in what order they vote for candidates, desire them to give their first-preference votes to the strongest man—the man with the best chance of getting in?—I do not think they will think it worth while. The strongest man will naturally get in, and will be preferred. They let him alone. They will not try to coerce. Coercion is rather vain; there is no necessity for it. You put forward six men; possibly you may get two in, or you may get three in. There is no necessity to coerce or try to influence your voters.

73. I do not mean coercion, but persuasion?—The sort of coercion that is possible if you put forward your six candidates is this: Your friends will generally vote for you, as they voted for Mr. Asquith or for Mr. Gladstone, and so on; they generally vote for the man they prefer. That always is the case. It is not necessary to give directions to that effect.

74. Say you had three likely candidates out of the six—Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, and some other Liberal, Mr. Haldane, for instance—if you could get your voters to divide their first-preference votes fairly amongst those three men, would not it be of very great advantage to the party if it was scientifically done?—No, I do not think so.

75. Giving each man his quota?—No, let us come to numbers. You have six men to be elected for Tasmania, and you have, say, 12,000 to vote, and 8,000 voters on one side who will get the majority we presume. You tell those 8,000 to vote in a particular order for particular men. How does it affect the number that will ultimately be brought in? They will get in their representatives according to the number they are altogether. If they put forward more men than they can get returned the man who is naturally favoured by the majority of that 8,000 will be the top man, and the man who is least favoured of all will be the bottom man, and, ultimately, the bottom man's votes will be transferred to the others. If party managers are wise they will not attempt to regulate the way in which the thing is done. They will leave them alone.

76. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Would not much the same thing arise without the transferable vote?—No, because then you might get such a waste of power that you might get the other side coming in in consequence of too great a force being thrown upon the first man. Especially in the case of this last election we had in which Mr. Asquith got such an immense number of votes; if there was no transferable vote Mr. Asquith would have got in, and all the extra force would have been wasted.

77-8. But what would be the effect of the transfer? It would ultimately bring him back?—It might do very

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much more than that, and might bring up two or three people. I have often known in the rude test elections we have had the transfers bring up people who were down below in the first place in succession to number one. I do not want to mention names particularly, but we used to put forward Mr. Gladstone's name, and two or three other men associated with him, and it frequently happened that Mr. Gladstone got an immense superiority, and then the next man in first preferences would be some prominent Labour man, or Socialist, and the others would be some official men, and so on; but when Mr. Gladstone's transfers were effected they brought up what may be called the party man into the second place above the Labour man, who was on the first chance occupying the second position.

79. (*Chairman.*) I think now we had better go through your summary of evidence. You start with the meaning of self-government. I do not think it necessary to ask any questions on that?—It appears to me to put before the mind pretty clearly what real representative government aims at. It secures as far as possible through a representative machinery the merits which real self-government in its popular and most democratic forms secures without that machinery. We want to bring into your representative chamber a reproduction of the forces, thoughts, agitations, desires, and opinions which are held throughout the mass of the people so as to secure in due proportion representation of each force outside. So the majority will always have their way, and the different elements of the minorities will always get a hearing.

80. With regard to the proceeding in the House of Commons before 1832, and the electoral reform movement before 1832, you put in a brief summary of the history of the movement?—Yes.

81. Is there anything you wish to add to that?—I do not quite know how it is to come in. In 1832 itself, when the Act was a Bill in progress through the House of Commons, the first proposal of reform was made by Mr. Praed.

82. That comes a little later. As to the electoral methods proposed, the first is "the limited vote"?—Yes, and the cumulative vote and the single transferable vote. I think I ought to add to that the division of the country into single-member constituencies, because that was defended and urged as a fair and secure way of obtaining the representation of minorities.

83. In 1832?—No, in 1885.

84. (*Lord Lochee.*) That is when London was broken up?—Yes, and all the counties.

85. And the old three-corner constituencies?—Yes, they were all broken up into one-member constituencies. Mr. Gladstone laid it down that that was not only simple and economical, but it went far to secure what many people ardently desired—the representation of minorities. At that time nobody could say it might not go a long way in that direction.

86. You are relying on an accidental result on one side being counterbalanced by a similar result on the other?—We know now that is not the case.

87. (*Chairman.*) In your list of various methods you make no mention at all of second ballot. I suppose you do not favour that in any way?—I do not see how the second ballot really comes in to your terms of reference. You are to examine into schemes to secure a more fully representative character to the Legislative Assembly. I would like to put the case of the second ballot in a very simple form before the Commission. Wales, as we know, now is represented by a purely Liberal set of members. There is not any but a Liberal member for Wales. Supposing that in Cardiff there had been three candidates set up and a man had come in not obtaining a majority of the votes cast at the election, that is a case in which the second ballot would apply. The second ballot would have brought in a Liberal; whereas in the absence of it you might have had a Conservative brought in for Cardiff. If you mean by a more fully representative character for your Legislative Assembly, a representation of a greater number of elements in your Assembly, it is obvious in that case the chance introduction of the Conservative at Cardiff would have given to the repre-

sentation of Wales a more fully representative character than it has, and a second ballot would have destroyed the odd chance of bringing in some one to give it the representative character which it does not possess. If, on the other hand, you understand "fully representative character" to mean each constituency represented by somebody fully representing the majority of that constituency, then the second ballot would in that case have secured for Cardiff its representation though it would have destroyed, so to speak, the varied character of the representation of Wales, but would have secured the representative character of each constituency. You have to make up your mind what you mean by "fully representative character" of a Legislative Assembly.

88. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) The splitting of votes between the Liberal, the Unionist, and the Labour man or Socialist in the northern constituencies is really the practical question of the day. I should be sorry, speaking for myself, to exclude the consideration of the difficulties which arise from such a state of things from the terms of our reference?—I know, but I put before the Commission this—and I think it might be necessary to dwell upon it: If I am to consider methods of securing a more fully representative character for the Legislative Assembly I must consider the effect of any proposal in the varied composition of that Assembly, and the second ballot does not appear to assist in securing a varied composition of the Assembly, on the contrary. There may be very good reasons for its adoption, such as the state of local feeling and the removal of the feeling of injustice to majorities in single-member seats. But it does not help to secure a more fully representative character for a Legislative Assembly; on the contrary, it prevents the irregular people, if you like to call them so, getting any variety of representation under the present haphazard scheme.

89. Yes, I am not enamoured of the second ballot in any way, but I do desire to see the full representation of the majority nearly as much as I desire to see the representation of the minority?—If you wanted it in Cardiff the second ballot or the single transferable vote, which is much simpler and more direct and easily arranged, will secure it for Cardiff. If you desire a majority representative in Cardiff in the member for Cardiff, it secures it for Cardiff. If you want a full representative character for Wales then it does, in respect of Wales, take away one little element.

90. It was with this point in my mind that I put to you whether you would not be content to see it begun with the towns and cities, because it is in the towns and cities that the public mind is so much pressed at the moment by this division of the voting power?—I have a good deal more in my mind than the removal of this particular difficulty, so I shall not be content with the application of it to towns and cities. I want to get it applied to the people in the country as well as in the towns.

91. Quite so, and the object of my question was to endeavour to obtain for the terms of reference an application which would refer to both sides of the question?—Yes.

92. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) If you take a larger area than Wales, say, if you take Great Britain, might not the result of the absence of a second ballot be to actually oust a majority from power?—It might.

93. Which would be worse than ousting a minority?—Quite so.

94. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) In fact it is pointed out in your proof that in the case of one election the party in the majority did not obtain a majority of the votes?—Not through the absence of a second ballot.

95. The second ballot, in certain cases of three candidates standing for one seat—a Liberal, a Labour man, and a Socialist—I imagine would not change the result?—That is true. It would not affect 50 seats in the wildest imagination. It would never affect those great contrasts which I have given in my evidence.

96. It would not affect the swing, but still it would prevent a minority from returning a member for a town?—It might in a particular town, and it would, no

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doubt; but it does not prevent a minority returning a majority throughout the country.

97. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) That would be prevented to a certain extent by redistribution?—Not at all. You might have an absolute redistribution with a perfect equality of electoral power, and the same number of electors in every constituency throughout the United Kingdom, and yet get a minority of an electorate returning a majority of members.

98. (*Lord Lochee.*) A minority of voters you mean?—Yes.

99. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You referred to a group of five constituencies at Tamworth and the neighbourhood, and you give them as an example?—Yes. I do not know that they are quite equal there, but they are approximately equal in Warwickshire. It does not depend on second ballot.

100. You have already stated your objection to the limited vote and also the cumulative vote?—I do not think I put the objections to the cumulative vote at all forcibly.

101. You do not approve of it as a working principle?—No. The cumulative vote did produce in the School Board a representation of the variety of interests concerned in the educational problem in a particular town. It secured that extremely well on the whole, but it involved a great amount of trouble and a great amount of party organisation in order to get certain results. The party organisers had to calculate with great exactness, and with the risk of failure in getting proper representation, as to how many they could put forward, and they had to give strict orders to the electorate as to the way in which they should vote in order to bring it about. But the main result was secured, and I think that ought always to be dwelt upon and emphasised. It was introduced into the School Board elections—it was not in the original Government Bill—by Lord Frederick Cavendish, and was supported by Mr. Forster, Minister for Education (Vice-President of the Council), and by Mr. W. H. Smith, a leading member of the Opposition, who had not then obtained the great parliamentary distinction he afterwards obtained. There was an inquiry by a Parliamentary Committee into the whole system, and we had evidence from Sir Francis Sandford (afterwards Lord Sandford) as to the utility of the cumulative vote in working the Education Act, and from Mr. Forster, Education Minister, and Mr. Patrick Cumin, who laid down very emphatically that if it had not been for the cumulative vote the Education Act could not have been worked at all, and you could not have got the compromise ultimately agreed upon in London and elsewhere. Then there was a Royal Commission subsequently, of which Cardinal Manning, the present Archbishop, and Mr. Sidney Buxton, and a great many eminent educationalists were members. They examined into the cumulative vote, and they all recognised the extreme value of it in working out the educational problem of the time, but they recognised also the difficulties, and they said the principle was very valuable and would be best carried out by the adoption of the single transferable vote. You probably know the history of the latest phase of the question of the cumulative vote in connection with the Scotch Education Bill of last year. The Government brought in a Bill for amending the Scotch educational machinery, and, amongst other things, for abolishing the cumulative vote. They found the cumulative vote had excited great dissatisfaction in Scotland on account of the extreme difficulty in working it and the trouble put upon party organisation, but they found on inquiry that the results of the voting all the same were very highly valued, and, when the Bill was referred to the Scottish Standing Committee, Mr. Phipson Beale brought up an amendment, not for the retention of the cumulative vote, but for the adoption in its stead of the single transferable vote, and, in spite of the force of the Government on the Scotch Committee, he was beaten by, I think, only 22 to 18. Ultimately the Government had to give up their scheme of abolishing the cumulative vote, and they retained it, with a possible change in the future. In view of the appointment of this Commission, they would not consent to any change then, but they saw they could not abolish the cumulative

vote, because it had succeeded and was very highly prized by a great many educationalists in Scotland.

102. (*Chairman.*) I take it you recognise its value in the past, but do not recommend its adoption for the future?—I recognise its value in the past, but everything it secured then can be secured now with perfect certainty, without the difficulties which are involved in its adoption, by what I propose to substitute for it. The cumulative vote is adopted by the Legislature in the election of the House of Representatives in Illinois, and has been adopted for the past 30 years in the election of the Legislative Council of Cape Colony, and Lord Milner in the House of Lords bore emphatic testimony to the superior results attained by the system of cumulative vote in the election to the Cape Colony Council—as compared with the ordinary machinery for the election of the House of Representatives, and the superiority of the members of the Council, and the greater stability in the composition of the Council.

103. After that comes your history of the movement for the adoption of the single transferable vote. That is chiefly on the main principles we have discussed already?—Yes.

104. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Do you hope for an improvement in the calibre of the elected representatives as the result of making larger districts of this kind?—I do. I look for great improvement in the electorate and in the elected. I look for greater force of character and more authoritative members in the House of Commons—greater stability in their position and more assurance that they will be able to retain their place if they are true to themselves and to their principles.

105. Do you think they would be more political men and less merely local men and constituency nurses?—I think that would be the tendency. We should get more real men—it is a word of great weight and perhaps ought not to be too lightly used, but I think we should get more “statesmen.” Mr. Mill, in his autobiography—and he is extraordinarily emphatic in that way—condemned those who do not appreciate the character of the operation of this change on the composition of the House of Commons in regard to any solution of the difficult problems of democracy in the future. He said we were quite accustomed to people resisting all change up to the very last moment, when it is recognised it is inevitable and must be accepted, but anybody who can deny the value of this great reform or is unable to realise it is “an incompetent statesman unequal to the politics of the future.” I quoted that in the House of Commons 30 years ago.

106. (*Chairman.*) On page 17 of your memorandum you give the figures for the general election of 1900, and from them it appears that whereas the Government obtained a majority of 134, under a proportional representation system their majority would have been only 16. Does not that practically mean that they would have been unable to form an administration?—I do not think so. Taking it merely as it stands, Lord Palmerston, in 1859, came into power with a majority I think of 14. I think the vote of want of confidence in Lord Derby, which was moved by Lord Hartington, was carried by 14 or 16 votes, but Lord Palmerston retained power from 1859 to 1865, and went on very composedly and very well in the whole of that period. But you must remember it is essential that if you are going to introduce this change you not only may reduce the majority down to 16, but you certainly alter the character of the elements of the two parties on each side. You make them more reasonable, more political, more open to conviction, and more independent of party—that source of alarm which party managers have—and you get them more and more freely supporting the Government when the Government is carrying with them the majority of the country at large. You would not be able to pass some Bills that the Government of 1900 did pass—that is quite certain—but I think the Bills that could have been passed with the composition of the people behind them under the change would have been Bills that would not have excited so much resentment and bad feeling, and Bills that would stay. In that way you get the whole operations of your parliamentary life changed, or, at least, influenced.

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107. Practically in all the general elections the majorities are out of all proportion to the representation?—Yes, and in one or two cases it is the other way.

108. You mean in 1886?—Yes.

109. (*Lord Loches.*) That includes a fair calculation for uncontested seats?—Yes. The calculation goes on in this way. You take the contested seats and compare the apparent movement of opinion in the contested seats between two consecutive elections, and apply the same apparent ratio of movement in the case of uncontested seats.

110. But if you look at the votes alone it still remains true that a minority of votes gets a majority of seats?—Yes, emphatically, if you look at votes alone, and it really is one of the most amazing things that can be well conceived. Here, in the election of 1895, you have a very large number of members—nearly 500 members—elected by something like 3,600,000 electors, and you get an actual minority of electors electing 280.

111. The numbers were 283 and 387?—Yes, in 1886. What you see in the election of 1895 might have applied to the whole country. The contested elections for that year yielded the following result:—202 Home Rulers were elected by 1,823,000 votes; 282 Unionists were elected by 1,785,000 votes.

112. (*Chairman.*) What are your views as to the difficulties of by-elections?—No doubt by-elections do present a rather novel problem; but, on the whole, I come to the conclusion that the simplest thing would be to take a by-election as an election of the whole of the constituency. For instance, if a member for Manchester died, that seat should be filled up by an appeal to all the electors of Manchester.

113. It is quite conceivable that where the minority only secured the representation of one, and he happened to die, that minority would go absolutely unrepresented as the result of a by-election?—Yes, for the rest of that Parliament.

114. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You would not adopt the system in Belgium of supplementary members?—I cannot quite see how it could be worked with our ideas.

115. (*Chairman.*) You could not guarantee that the member would remain of the same politics after a few years?—No; directly you suggest it I think you will see it is not a practical thing. You might say that each man on being elected could nominate his committee, or his electorate who should have the power of filling his vacancy if he died. But it is not possible. We could not entrust that power to anybody.

116. Any system of co-option would you suggest?—I am inclined to think that under the dominance of this system, if it were adopted, we should get more deference paid to the notion of maintenance of representation on particular principles; so that if, for example, a Labour member for Manchester died, there would be a great feeling in Manchester, without co-option, that a Labour man ought to succeed him; and if a Conservative of a moderate type died, there would be a great feeling that a man of the same type should be allowed to succeed him. I think that idea would develop a great deal. I will point out, what I think will be admitted, that the number of vacancies in future Parliaments probably would be much less than they have been. One reason is that Parliaments will probably be shortened to five instead of seven year Parliaments. That seems to be the general idea—settling down to five-year Parliaments. Then as to the necessity of re-election on taking office, I should say—I am open to hear opinions on the part of any member of the Commission—the idea has gained ground, and is now almost generally accepted, that there should be no necessity for re-election on taking office.

117. I do not think we should make such a recommendation as that?—Not at all, but I am only pointing it out as bearing upon the importance of by-elections. The late Government did recommend the abolition of the necessity of re-election, and it has been recommended by advanced reformers over and over again, and a Bill was brought in for the purpose some 40 years ago.

118. (*Lord Loches.*) It was opposed by Mr. Harcourt?—Yes.

119. And he lost Oxford very soon after?—Yes. There was great inconvenience after the election of 1868, in consequence of the necessity of re-electing many of the members, and a Bill was brought in almost immediately, and it was opposed by Mr. Harcourt, as he then was.

120. (*Chairman.*) You do not think the practical difficulties of your proposal are serious at all?—I think the practical difficulties to the voter are not at all serious. Much greater difficulties have been overcome by voters on the Continent and in the Colonies, who are certainly not superior in intelligence to our own voters; and the practical difficulty of the returning officer, which is on the face of it much more threatening, as I admit at once, is also one which proves on examination not to be at all great. There I pray in aid the conclusion arrived at by the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Municipal Representation Bill, upon which they heard the details of the whole operation explained, and some of the members went afterwards and saw an illustrative election carried through—a real election to the Medical Council—and they came to the conclusion that there was no practical difficulty in the adoption of the scheme.

121. But your election last year was all conducted by experts?—They were no more experts than you would be able to find everywhere.

122. You had Post Office sorters for instance?—Yes; they, or bank clerks of the same character, are to be found in every town in England.

123. Then there is a calculation by multiplication with a large fraction?—A Rule of Three calculation.

124. That would be a matter of some difficulty to the ordinary returning officer?—I do not think so. He could have a couple of men at his elbow helping him. I think that could all be overcome. Tasmania is another illustration; and also what has been resolved upon in the Cape. I should not have anticipated such a result. The best men of all parties in the colonies of the Cape assembled together and devised a constitution for the whole of South Africa, and recommended the adoption of proportional representation in every election under it, and the readjustment of the whole of the country into electoral divisions, allowing the application of proportional representation.

125. You think you have eliminated almost any element of chance?—I never thought it serious, but I think it has gone.

126. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You have probably read the paper once written on the subject by Mr. Boyd Kinnear, who pointed out that there was an element of chance; but I think the Proportional Representation Society meets that now?—Yes.

127. The paper created a great deal of attention at the time?—Yes.

128. (*Chairman.*) It might be practically non-existent, but if there is the slightest feeling that there is some chance or luck about it, it makes the chances of its success much less?—The chance of its adoption, you mean. The suggestion of chance creates a prejudice, but we have overcome that prejudice elsewhere, and people have only to realise how much chance there is in the present system.

129. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) The area of Tasmania is about the size of Scotland. I think that is the largest area over which a proportional representation election has been held?—I suppose it is. They are going to have a test election in South Africa.

130. That will be a very large area?—Yes.

131. (*Chairman.*) The constitution has not been ratified yet?—They are organising the test election now.

132. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) An election itself or only a test election?—A test.

133. They will hold it as soon as possible?—Yes.

134. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) With regard to the suggestion often made that it will lead to a multiplicity of candidates, do you attach any serious weight to that?—I do not.

135. You are aware that in some countries in the world candidates have to make deposits?—Yes, they

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[Continued.]

have to do so now in England for returning officers' expenses.

136. You have had great experience of the House of Commons, and you have referred to the late Parliament and the one before that; but there was a Parliament, I think, which sat from 1892 to 1895, in which the Government of the day or the two Governments of the day—under Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery—had but a very small majority in the House of Commons. Was not their condition regarded as somewhat a matter for commiseration at the time?—I do not know quite.

137. Were not their difficulties in carrying legislation very much greater than those of the present Government?—They did carry two very remarkable pieces of legislation. It shows what can be done even with a very small majority. One measure was Sir William Harcourt's Finance Bill.

138. (*Lord Loches.*) Without the closure?—Without a single application of the closure, that was carried. That is a monument of that particular Parliament. The other measure was the Local Government Bill.

139. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) But they failed to carry a somewhat more remarkable piece of legislation?—They failed to carry the Home Rule Bill.

140. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) I suppose you will hardly say there is any important section of the nation that is not represented somehow or other in the present House of Commons. You may say it is not adequately represented, but can you suggest any group, section, or shade of opinion which does not find some representation in the House of Commons?—Yes, I think there are some opinions now which are scarcely at all represented in the House of Commons.

141. Which would be represented under your system?—I think there would be a chance of it. At all

events they would be developed and encouraged to come in.

142. (*Lord Loches.*) Do you refer to political opinions?—Yes. I think the purely international politician is not to be found in the House of Commons now.

143. I do not quite understand that phrase?—Almost all politicians now in the House of Commons are separated from other countries—they are removed from, stand apart from, and do not have any association with them. Prosper Mérimée said of Mr. Cobden that he was the most international man he ever met with. You do not even meet among the Labour men with many, if any, examples of that type of man. They are most painfully restricted. We do not get that outspoken expression of opinion in respect of our relations with other countries which might be anticipated, and which no doubt exists, more or less, privately in the country.

144. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) But take an undoubtedly intelligent but small body of people like those who are called in common cant "Unionist Free-fooders" represented by Lord Hugh Cecil and others. Do you think under your proposal they would get a fair chance of some of their more able men getting into Parliament, or a better chance of it than now?—They certainly would, and, what is more important, they would keep their position. It is a little more difficult to get back than to retain a seat. They would have kept their position; just as in the prior time, when Home Rule was raised, a good many Liberals who were not Home Rulers would have kept their position as Liberal Unionists, but one by one they dropped out, or became Unionists without the "Liberal."

SECOND DAY.

Tuesday, 6th April 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

The Right Hon. LORD LOCHES OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D.,
D.C.L.
The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

LORD COURTNEY OF PENWITHE recalled.

145. (*Chairman*). I believe you wish to supplement your evidence given last Thursday in some particulars?—After the Commission rose, I asked permission last time to put in a letter which I had written to Mr. Gladstone in November 1884. At that time, the Commission may remember, the question of the assimilation of the borough and county franchise was the subject of a Bill before Parliament, and there was a dispute thereupon as to whether this assimilation could be made without being accompanied by a redistribution of seats. There was an acute controversy upon that point, and ultimately, as the members of the Commission may remember, it was settled by compromise, by the adoption of the system of single-member seats. My letter to Mr. Gladstone was written before the question of redistribution was, as far as I know, at all considered by the Cabinet, or even by any member of the Cabinet. They were at that time prosecuting the Bill for the assimilation of borough and county franchise, and refusing for the moment to connect it with the other subject, though admitting that the reform would not be complete until the other subject was taken up. I wrote to Mr. Gladstone pressing him very earnestly to anticipate what was evidently necessary

—the consideration of the principles upon which redistribution should be effected—and addressed to him the arguments which I put before the Commission and have made public often and often since, in favour of proportional representation as the only means of securing a real representation of the people and a trustworthy House of Commons. After giving, I hope fairly enough, the arguments for and against the then existing system, and the way in which, as all admitted, the common-sense of Ministers and members did in some measure correct its evils, and forecasting the further evils that would follow if that system was developed still further, I in a sequel drew attention to what I thought the gravest question connected with redistribution, that is, the future government of Ireland. If I may without undue egotism say so, I think that that part of the letter at all events is worth consideration even now, as an illustration of what the Proportional Representation Society has been struggling to correct, and what has been developed more plainly since 1884 than could then have been anticipated. With the permission of the Commission, I will put in this letter.

146. This you wish to go in with the evidence which you gave the other day?—Yes; it is rather long, but

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[Continued.]

not, I think, too long. (*Handing in the letter.*)* There were two other points on which I should like to give supplementary evidence. In the first place, in calling attention to the discrepancy which has often arisen between the proportion of the voters voting and the members returned—a discrepancy which in some cases has amounted to an absolute contradiction, the majority of the voters being one way and the majority of members returned being the other way in the political division—it was suggested that that arose from the loss of seats to the majority through three-cornered contests. At the time I said I thought that was a comparatively small matter and did not affect the question. I have since had the figures looked into, and in the cardinal example of 1886, when it will be remembered, as it is practically admitted, that there was a great contradiction between the majority of members and the majority of voters, there was not a single seat affected by a three-cornered contest. The discrepancy did not arise at all from the fact of three-cornered contests. Again, in the great example of 1895 there was that extraordinary contradiction brought out between the number of seats won and the number of votes given; but there were only 13 seats which we can describe as having been affected by three-cornered contests; whereas there were 282 won by the Unionists against 202 by the Home Rulers. So, transferring the whole 13, there would have been still a considerable balance won by Unionists, although the voters of the Unionists were in a minority. Those two facts, I think, dispel the suggestion that these contradictions arise from the misfortune or mischances that follow three-cornered contests. In fact, if I might be allowed to go one step further, I would show, I think, by an easy example, that it arises from quite a different thing. You may have perfectly straight fights between two parties, and two parties only, and yet, through the chance distribution of the electors and the seats, have a miscarriage in respect of the representation of the majorities to which I have referred. I do not know whether the members of the Commission would humour me so far as to put down a few figures on paper, which will make what I am now saying much plainer. Suppose a case of a constituency in which 30,000 vote, and there are 16,000 on the side of the majority and 14,000 on the side of the minority. Now suppose that constituency is divided into five sub-constituencies, each with 6,000 voters absolutely equal in size, and that there is a straight fight for the seat in each of those five sub-constituencies. For the sake of avoiding confusion, I will call the two parties "Big-Endians" and "Little-Endians," as Jonathan Swift humorously put it. Supposing in the first constituency, A, the Big-Endians poll 3,700 votes, and the Little-Endians poll 2,300 votes, that is a majority of 1,400 for the Big-Endians. Suppose in the next one, B, the Big-Endians poll 3,600 and the Little-Endians 2,400 votes, there is a majority of 1,200. Now, in sub-constituency C, let the Big-Endians poll 2,950 votes and the Little-Endians 3,050—the Little-Endians have a majority there of 100. In the next sub-constituency, D, the Big-Endians poll 2,900 votes and the Little-Endians 3,100 votes, a majority for the Little-Endians of 200. Now in the next one the Big-Endians poll 2,850 votes and the Little-Endians 3,150 votes, a majority of 300 for the Little-Endians. You will see, I think, by adding them together that the Big-Endians have polled in the numbers I have suggested 16,000 as against 14,000 for the Little-Endians, but the Big-Endians have only won two seats, while the Little-Endians have won three. You will see that is a perfectly straight stand-up fight in each of the five constituencies; and the explanation is simply this: that through the allocation of the population of the town, the Big-Endians are crowded on one side of the town while the Big and Little Endians are more evenly distributed on the other. It may be a working-class constituency on one side of the town, and the other side be composed of villas and small shopkeepers; but it is a thing that happens continually that you have crowded on one side of the town a political

party of one strength and on the other side of the town more evenly-balanced parties. One party crowds in very much greater numbers on one side than on the other. The next point I would refer to is that three out of the five seats are carried by relatively small majorities—a thing that might well happen. Now take such a variation of opinion as would only transfer five per cent. of the votes from the Little-Endians to the Big-Endians, what would be the result? The Big-Endians would win every one of the five seats. That is the kind of oscillation which occurs throughout the United Kingdom. So now you may get a minority of electors securing, it may be, a majority of seats, but at all events much more than they are entitled to in votes, and then again the majority of the electors securing a vastly disproportionate and exaggerated representation. I put those figures before you as a simple illustration, so as to dispel at all events the notion that these discrepancies arise from three-cornered contests. The facts I have stated with reference to the elections of 1886 and 1895 confirm these conclusions. The three-cornered contest may aggravate such discrepancies, and in some measure contribute to them, but that is not the essential vice.

147. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) And will no doubt aggravate them even more in the future with the rise of the Labour Party and the Socialist Party?—Yes, with the rise of independent parties, no doubt.

148. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Do you mean that, in the election of 1895, if the second ballot had been in force it only would have applied to fifteen constituencies?—13 seats only. It might have applied to 16, but 13 one way and three another.

149. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Is that 1895 or 1886?—1895. In 1886 there was not one. The other point to which I would like to refer is this: It was suggested by one member of the Commission that the elaborate and time-consuming process of transfer would not be necessary, because often the result of the first ballot would bring out the same persons returned as the result arrived at after many transfers. Now no doubt that would sometimes happen, but you cannot depend upon it happening; you could not secure it happening, although you might bestow a great deal of care and attention on the drilling of electors so as to bring it about. I would like to show one more example, and refer to one historic example which shows how impossible it would be occasionally to secure anything like the first result being the same as the final result arrived at. In the first election for the School Board for Marylebone Miss Garrett, afterwards Mrs. Garrett Anderson, stood as a woman candidate. It was the first illustration of a woman candidate, and she had made herself conspicuous by her wonderful skill and energy, and I may also say, modesty, by which she had opened the medical profession to her sex and achieved a remarkable position. There was great political excitement, which I well remember, stirring up women who had got the vote to vote for her in large numbers, and other people exerted themselves very largely. She got on that occasion 47,000 votes, and was at the top of the poll. Seven members had to be then elected for Marylebone. The lowest of the seven successful candidates—I think Huxley was one of them, although not the lowest—got something like 7,000 votes, so that Mrs. Garrett Anderson herself had got more than the power of six of the lowest; and if the transfer had been effected the result would have been something very different as respects the lower positions. If you have a person in a commanding position, whether from political reputation or from local association, or from what not, standing as one of several candidates for a constituency returning seven members, as in Marylebone, you might, in the absence of transfers, get a person at the top of the poll with this overwhelming wasted power, which you could not correct except by excessive drilling and bringing into use again the machinery the use of which we want to diminish, and which is prevented by our process of allowing transfers to be made which are indicated beforehand by the voter as he marks his paper. So that the brain, the temper, the mind, and the will of the voter working throughout produces in the end that

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direct representation of the balance of opinions and divisions among the electorate which we want to secure without any manipulation, without any drilling beforehand. The enthusiasm of the voters for a particular candidate may be permitted to be indulged in without any loss to the party, and without any loss to the real representation of the resulting election.

150. (*Chairman.*) You do not anticipate that the party organisers will try and arrange the preference between the various members of their party?—I do not think they would. I do not think they will find it desirable. I think they will probably discover that they excite more jealousies by suggesting preference than they would do good. I remember pressing this upon the leader of a political organisation in one of our big towns, who was not friendly to proportional representation, and who took the point. He saw the value of it at once, as far as his interest was concerned, and said they would say to people: "Put up as many candidates as you like and vote for them; only vote through and through, so that all our forces shall be concentrated together on the exact number whose return can be secured."

151. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You do not attach much importance to laziness as a factor in political organisation? I think the Chairman suggested that the tendency of the average voter would be to vote on a list supplied to him by the agent of a party. Do not you think that would be so?—Possibly it might be. Undoubtedly reference to experience tests it, and that is the case on the Continent, where lists are put out, and where the variations from the list are very few; but I do not see the advantage of allowing or encouraging that laziness. The elector can vote as he pleases, and he will exercise his faculty.

152. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) The elector is very often too lazy to exercise his second choice. That has been another trouble?—I am quite willing to face that. I think in process of a very short time the propriety of going to a second choice would be recognised by everybody. That is a thing which the managers of parties would very readily press upon their friends: "Vote right through our ticket in any order you like, but vote right through; otherwise we shall be in danger of losing the result."

153. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You would not be prepared to consider making it compulsory?—No, the word "compulsion" is not a word I am very fond of, and I think in this matter there should be free voting of free men—if that is not cant.

154. When I say "compulsory" I mean making him spoil the ballot paper if he does not go on and fill it up?—No, I think there would be difficulty in saying how much he should fill up.

155. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) I believe they have had to attempt something of the sort in Australia to compel the second choice?—Yes. They have in Belgium, I think, the power of compulsion, but it is not easily worked.

156. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) There is one point I should very much like to press upon you, and that is: Is it not a distinct advantage that a man should have as many first preference votes as possible?—I do not recognise it. It would be no doubt a feather in his cap.

157. Again, is it not the case that when the sorting and transferring process is being carried through the candidates who are first sacrificed and first knocked out are those at the bottom who get fewest first votes?—That is so.

158. Then it would be a distinct advantage, supposing in a constituency there were three Liberal candidates, to the Liberals that instead of having one

man with all the first votes and the other two with second and third preferences only, they should divide as far as possible the first votes?—If the Liberal votes are sufficient to bring in the three men those three men will be brought in. If there are not sufficient to bring in the three men then the lowest will be the man to be dropped out; but so far as they are sufficient to bring in their men they will be brought in. The first man with his majority and overplus will pass it on to the second and third, and all the power they can bring in will be brought in. But if the Liberals run ten candidates and can only secure five, no doubt it is desirable to get as many first votes as you can. It is desirable not to be down to the lowest of all.

159. Again, supposing the Liberals had a heavy vote, but, for instance, that you had Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Burt, and the whole or nearly the whole of the electors voted in this way, Asquith 1, Lloyd George 2, Burt 3, so that Mr. Burt was at the bottom of the list with his first preferences, would not he run a greater risk of being cut out altogether?—Not at all if the Liberal force is sufficient to carry the three. If there are three quotas among them he must come in and could not be cut out, because the overplus after you get Asquith's quota is passed on to Lloyd George if necessary, and after his quota the third quota passes to Burt. If the force is there it must come even to the last.

160. You mean as long as the Liberals are strong enough to make Burt's votes up to his quota he will get in?—Yes.

161. The process of sacrifice does not come in until they have not enough to make the quota?—No, not until after the transfers have been exhausted do you begin to cut out those who have no chance.

162. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Do you approve of the system in the Bill for Proportional Representation of 1872? It seems to be somewhat simpler than a single transferable vote. The distribution is made almost entirely by distributing the preferences of the lowest candidate?—No, I think not. I have not verified my memory of that Bill, but I am pretty sure it cannot be so. The difference between the Bill of 1872 in principle and the Bill which we are now promoting is simply this—that in the distribution of the surplus, in that case the surplus would be taken out by chance, relying on the fact that wherever you take it out of the votes given to the man at the top who had got the surplus the result would be the same. Whereas, in deference to the anxieties and criticisms which have been excited by that element of chance, we have resorted to a proportionate distribution, so as to avoid that element coming in. Otherwise I think Mr. Walter Morrison's Bill exactly corresponds in principle to what we do to-day. Mr. Walter Morrison himself survives amongst us, but the other three who backed the Bill have gone—Mr. Auberon Herbert, Mr. Fawcett, and Mr. Tom Hughes. It was a rough sketch put forward by way of helping to educate the opinion of the House of Commons at that time. If I remember rightly, so little went on the details of redistribution that it divided Wales into two constituencies.

163. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Did you ever discuss the question with John Stuart Mill personally?—Yes.

164. Did he ever express any opinion as to how far you would gain the expected good results from constituencies of moderate size?—I do not think I discussed that with him. Of course his mind was occupied with larger schemes; but he was a man of a practical turn of mind too, and I have no doubt what the result of a discussion would have been, though I never did discuss it with him.

The witness withdrew.

LETTER handed in by LORD COURTNEY.

Letter addressed by Mr. Leonard H. Courtney, M.P., Financial Secretary to the Treasury, to the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., Prime Minister, prior to the introduction of the Redistribution Bill in 1884.—November 8th, 1884.

The answer you gave last week to the inquiry of Sir John Lubbock was probably such as he himself expected, but it must have left him and those who, like myself, agree with him anxious lest the principle of proportional representation should not receive due

consideration at a time when consideration of it may be fruitful.

The Redistribution Bill will follow the Franchise Bill, but the scheme of the Redistribution Bill must be framed while the Franchise Bill is still in progress.

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[Continued.]

When it is once laid upon the table the introduction of any new principle into it must be perilous if not impossible. It is now, if at all, that alteration of its form must be considered; and yet Parliamentary necessities prevent any public discussion that might help towards any adequate examination of the different methods of its construction and an enlightened determination of the form it shall assume.

No course appears to remain but that of a private submission to your judgment of what might in other circumstances have been urged publicly.

I venture to address you thus on my own responsibility, and I would plead in justification the very large number of Members of Parliament (190 or more) who have become members of the Proportional Representation Society, and have thus expressed their approval of its principles, and my own profound and now long-rooted sense of its national importance.

My appreciation of the principle of proportional representation is more than 30 years old, and dates before the recognition of it in the Reform Bill of 1853 brought in by Lord (John) Russell when your colleague in the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen; although I must confess that at that time my apprehension of it was imperfect. I was however thus early strongly convinced of the injury done to our national life by the deleterious training more or less undergone by everyone who is drawn into the political world, and by the loss of such men who are shut out of it as refusing to submit to this training. There are men who cannot serve the State, just as there are men who cannot serve the Church, because they cannot subscribe, except in a non-natural sense, to all the articles imposed on those admitted to service. Many persons must have many ways of regarding the same subject; but the vice which I have thus briefly indicated seems to me the spring of the evils of our political system. We deny ourselves some of the richest elements of national life. Parliament is not a distillation of the best wisdom of the commonwealth. It is derived—I will not say from contaminated, but from imperfect sources. Were it not for the literature of the outer world, and it is doubtful whether the quality of this corrective tends to improve, Parliament would degenerate more and more; and, as it is, the struggles of its degraded factions are in peril of becoming a by-word. I may remind you that you yourself have borne witness to the decline in the standard of Parliamentary life during the last 30 years, and we must look to other communities of English origin, to our colonies whether attached or detached from us, for the fuller outcome of what is yet in germ among ourselves. There you will find the public good becomes the spoil of professional politicians, against whose domination the better sort struggle again and again to set themselves free, but struggle in vain. As long as the prevalent processes of election render the intimate cohesion of parties essential to success in procuring a voice in the deliberating assembly of the nation, the attempt to regenerate a party from within is made against almost insuperable difficulties. It was, I suppose, under the influence of some such views as those of democratic development that Mr. Mill hailed with enthusiasm the revelation of the true principle of representation. It gave him, he said, a new hope. In the security that the views of the few shall not be silenced by the clamour of the vulgar lies our trust that the strain of a nation shall become purer and higher instead of declining to a lower and lower level.

I have not dwelt upon points which have perhaps more powerfully attracted the majority of minds to proportional representation, because I have thought it due to you to go at once to what I believe to be the centre of the argument. But you will perhaps let me indicate some of these points. In the first place, we can have no security that the result of an election conducted according to the traditional method—i.e., where the country is divided into districts in each of which the majority of its electors elect its representatives—corresponds to the division of parties among the mass of electors. I speak of two parties as the simplest case. The two parties may be evenly distributed among all the divisions of the country so that

the dominant party monopolises all the representation, as is approximately done in Wales and Scotland. Or without a practical monopoly, a slender majority on one side may produce a disproportionate majority in the representative assembly. Or a majority among the electors may fail to secure even a majority among the elected. (If, for example, an area was divided into five districts (A, B, C, D, E) each containing 6,000 electors, so that there are 30,000 electors in all, and then electors are divided among the parties X and Y so that 16,000 belong to party X and 14,000 to party Y. Imagine in A district there are 4,000 X to 2,000 Y, and in B district the same. There will remain for districts C, D, E 8,000 of party X and 10,000 of party Y, and it would be easy for Y to secure all three districts; with the result that the minority of electors secure the majority of the elected. It may be said this is fanciful, but it has been often realised in the United States. A Presidential election polls the collected electors of a State on one side or the other; the representation of the same State in Congress is secured by its division into districts of equal population; and it has frequently happened that the Presidential vote of a State has gone one way, while the election of Congress men has gone the other.)

Next to the uncertainty that must attach to the result of an election is the point of the enormous power the system throws into the hands of a small oscillating fraction. It is through this that the degradation of the character of candidates has been made most manifest to many. It is through this that the tendency arises, which you have noted, towards a gerontocracy and a plutocracy. I am bound, however, to add that there is some compensation here, for it is through this that an earnest minority compels attention to its views. Unable to obtain its proper direct representation in the Legislature, it, more or less tardily, and with more or less of sincerity in the results, converts to its views candidates who learn that without its support their candidature must be unavailing.

Closely connected with the last point is the evil of the great turnover of political parties, which, recently observed at home, is a perpetually recurring phenomenon in our colonies. I believe there are no such violent changes in the national judgment as these election results would indicate. The best test of public opinion is after all to be found in the fleeting literature of the press, although I have acknowledged it to be imperfect and I fear it is not improving, and if it is judged by this test we should say that the determination of the national will was continuously towards sober temperate progress. Political leaders in England try to fall in with this determination, and hence it is that Conservative Administrations are necessarily Liberal and Liberal Administrations Conservative in their action; but the elections come and place the control of power at the disposition of a numerically insignificant section of the electorate. Here again I am admitting that the good sense of statesmen limits and checks the mischief of the misrepresenting changes of periodic elections, and their power to reduce this mischief becomes less as numbers grow in constituencies by the enlargement of their areas and the wider enfranchisement of residents.

I would wish not to trespass unduly on your time, but you may perhaps expect me to say a word or two on the plans for realising the principle of proportional representation supposing the principle is admitted. Many are ready to recognise the attractions of the idea. They confess the justice of securing an equal power of representation to electors; they see the natural advantage of securing in the governing chamber the presence of men sitting with all the authority of popular representation, yet able to express without anxiety unpopular opinions. The vision of a Council open, free, truthful, and embodying in its resultant voice the determination of the national will, is contemplated with something like exultation. But they do not see their way to attain this end. You need not be reminded that no ideal can be realised at once. We must begin with slow and scarcely recognisable processes to build up the edifice we mean to rear. The present limited vote is an imperfect device, but it cannot be contested that it secures a far better repre-

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LORD COURTNEY OF PENWITH.

[Continued.]

sentation of the constituencies to which it is applied than the method it superseded, or (I would add) any method of pure majority voting. The cumulative vote has been applied on a large scale and with remarkable success, as far as attaining what was desired, in school board elections. It has made the Act of 1870 workable, as it has secured the representation and in most boards the co-operation of parties that under the older systems would have been fighting for exclusive possession, and would be forced, when in possession, to make their first object the promotion of sectional interests. In the single transferable vote I would submit a method which would realise all the good the cumulative vote has secured whilst emancipating the electors from the necessity of conforming to the directions of some political organisation which the cumulative vote undoubtedly requires. But there are many other plans, any one of which I should be ready to support as tending towards the end I seek. Any coat is better than none, and there is a choice of serviceable garments for those who wish to be clothed.

I cannot conclude without a few words on a subject I regard as of transcendent importance in connection with this reform. I mean Ireland. The future of Ireland is dark and threatens to become one of deepening gloom. If we contrast the Parliamentary representation of the island with what it was 25 years ago, and then attempt to picture what it may be a few years hence, we must be filled with anxiety. We may reduce the disorganisation within the House of Commons by the adoption of adequate rules, but no reformed rules can cope with the fact of a Parliamentary representation of Ireland irreconcilably opposed with few exceptions to the Parliamentary connection with

Great Britain. If the threatened Parliamentary representation did truly correspond with the division of opinion in Ireland the conscience of the nation would not endure to maintain the Union. Home Rule would be inevitable. But I doubt whether it will be possible to ensure the constant appreciation by the popular intelligence of the divergence between representation and opinion. I remember to have once heard you say that you would look to no manifestation of the opinion of the Irish people save through their representatives in Parliament. And in a case like this there is a natural tendency to make the apparent real. The minds of men are drawn to the predominance that seems to exist, and the Irish Nationalist party will gain strength because it looks so strong. Yet reverting to the state of Ireland 25 years ago, to the gradual permeation of the island by a sounder social and industrial organisation then in progress, to the practical acceptance at that time of legislative union, it cannot be doubted that there must still remain within its confines a large nucleus of temperate opinion, in the best sense of the words, both liberal and conservative, which is failing to secure Parliamentary expression and is in imminent danger of being soon entirely deprived of it. With its waning influence in the Legislature its life must wane, and unless my forebodings are all false the prospect before us should compel the most anxious care to save loyal and rational Irishmen from disappearance from the Parliamentary arena. There is a strong case in Great Britain for large efforts to secure proportional representation, but in Ireland it is clamorous. In this interest I would most urgently beseech a consideration of the whole subject before the day of consideration is passed.

Mr. JOHN H. HUMPHREYS called and examined.

Memorandum, handed in by the Witness, on the Practical Conduct of Elections with the Single Transferable Vote.

THE PRACTICAL CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS WITH THE SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE.

MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATION BILL RULES.

Personal Experience.

I have been Secretary since March 1905 of the Proportional Representation Society.

I have watched the counting of votes at parliamentary and municipal elections, but in no responsible capacity other than that of candidate's agent at a municipal election.

I watched the details of a Belgian parliamentary election, May, 1908.

I have conducted small elections with the single transferable vote on behalf of the Metropolitan Counties Branch of the British Medical Association.

I have conducted model elections on behalf of the Proportional Representation Society. I was responsible for the organisation of the elections in 1906 and 1908 when 12,418 and 21,690 votes were respectively dealt with.

Polling Proceedings.

The proceedings at the poll would be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Ballot Act, as at present, with one modification.

This modification affects the ballot paper.

The ballot paper must be in such a form that the voter may place the figures 1, 2, 3 against the names of candidates in the order of his choice.

Every elector has one vote only, and votes by marking the paper with the figure 1 in the square opposite the name of the candidate for whom he votes.

The elector need do no more, but may in addition place on the ballot paper the figures 2, 3, 4, and so on, in the squares opposite the names of other candidates in the order of his preferences.

A ballot paper will be spoiled if the figure 1 is not marked or is set opposite the name of more than one candidate, or if the figure 1 and some other figure is set opposite the name of the same candidate. (*Specimen ballot paper submitted.*)

Preliminary Steps in Counting the Votes.

All preliminary steps under the new system would be taken in accordance with the provisions of the Ballot Act.

The ballot boxes would be opened, and the number of papers contained in each would be verified with the presiding officer's account.

The total number of votes thus ascertained would act as a check upon all subsequent proceedings.

The Counting of Votes stated in General Terms.

The counting of votes at parliamentary elections at the present time consists of the sorting and counting of ballot papers, doubtful or spoiled papers being reserved for the decision of the returning officer. In the organisation of the election the returning officer is necessarily assisted by an expert staff.

With the single transferable vote the counting of votes would consist of the sorting and counting of ballot papers, doubtful and spoiled papers being reserved, as before, for the decision of the returning officer. In addition, a few calculations of the nature of rule-of-three sums would be necessary whenever surplus votes had to be transferred. In the organisation of the election the returning officer would, as at present, be assisted by an expert staff.

In each case men competent to sort and to count ballot papers are required, whilst with the single transferable vote the returning officer should include with his expert staff two assistants who are used to figures and able to work sums in proportion. Such sums are taught in every elementary school in the kingdom; but, nevertheless, it is desirable, in order to ensure that the calculations are made with the necessary promptitude and certainty that the assistants should have had experience with figures. There should be no difficulty in obtaining the required assistance from the accountant's department of any corporation. Two assistants required, in order that they may check each other's work.

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[Continued.]

The Arrangement of the Counting Room.

Plan of room at model election submitted. The room was so arranged that the different branches of the work—(1) the sorting, (2) the counting, and (3) the calculations at the returning officer's table—were kept quite distinct.

This object was effected by allotting separate tables to the sorters, to the counters, and to the returning officer's assistants. The staff engaged in these various duties remained at their posts, and the connection between the three branches of the work was made by messengers.

The messengers carried the papers when sorted from the sorting table to the counting tables; carried the bundles of votes when counted to the returning officer's table, and submitted doubtful votes to the returning officer.

The First Process in the Counting of the Votes at the Model Election, 1908.

The papers were sorted according to the names of candidates marked with the figure 1.

For this purpose a dozen sets of pigeon holes were provided, each set having twelve compartments and each compartment being labelled with the name of a candidate. (*Specimen set of pigeon holes shown.*)

The sorters (in the model election, chiefly Post Office sorters) received verbal instructions and, in addition, there were placed upon the top of each set of pigeon holes printed instructions as follows:—

Instructions to Sorters, No 1.

Sort the ballot papers according to the names marked 1.

Place spoiled or doubtful papers on top of the case (right-hand side).

Whilst the papers were being sorted they were collected by the messengers and taken to the counting tables ranged on either side of the sorting table. The spoiled papers were taken to the returning officer for his decision.

Each counter counted the papers of some one candidate only; several counters, however, being allotted to popular candidates.

Each counter received printed instructions (*copy submitted*).

The first duty of each counter was to check the sorting of the papers and to place on one side any paper which had been handed to him, which was not proper to the candidate whose papers it was his duty to count. These mis-sorts were collected by the messengers and taken back to the sorting table for the purpose of re-sorting. The work of sorting was thus checked by two men acting quite independently of each other.

The next duty of the counters was to count the papers into bundles of 50, and in order that this part of the work should also be checked, they were instructed to count each bundle twice.

As the counters were working in pairs, the process of checking might have been made more complete by arranging that each counter should check the work of his colleague, or at least should satisfy himself that the bundle contained 50 papers and no more before passing the bundle for collection.

Each bundle, after being checked, was enclosed with a coloured card and an elastic band, the coloured card bearing the name of the candidate to whom the votes were proper.

The bundles were taken by messengers to the returning officer's table, where there was a row of open boxes, each labelled with the name of a candidate.

The returning officer's assistants made these bundles of 50 into larger bundles of 500 and ascertained the total for each candidate, carefully keeping the papers in the boxes allotted to the respective candidates.

The returning officer's assistants, after having checked each other's work, entered the totals for each candidate in the first column of the returning officer's account sheet. (*Specimen produced.*)

The totals which in a real election would be ascertained at the commencement of the proceedings would form a check upon the totals obtained at the conclusion

of the first process, every part of which would have been verified.

The Second Process.—The Ascertainment of the Quota.

The quota, which is the least number of votes sufficient to render certain the election of a candidate, is ascertained at the returning officer's table, in accordance with the instructions contained in Rule No. 2 of the Schedule to the Municipal Representation Bill.

In the model election five members were to be elected, and it was therefore necessary to divide the total number of valid votes by six, and to add one to the quotient.

A knowledge of the first four rules of arithmetic is sufficient for this operation, which, however, was carried out independently by the two assistants specially attached to the returning officer.

After the ascertainment of the quota it was the duty of the returning officer to declare elected those candidates who had received a quota or more than a quota of votes.

The Third Process.—The Transfer of Surplus Votes.

The next duty of the returning officer was to transfer in strict proportions the surplus votes of those candidates who had received more than a quota to those unelected candidates who had been indicated on the ballot papers as the next choice of the electors whose votes were being dealt with.

The object of this process is to prevent waste of voting power. An unnecessarily large number of votes might be polled by a very popular candidate, and by the process of transfer his supporters secure their full share of representation.

The largest surplus is dealt with first, and at the model election of 1908, this surplus was that of Mr. Asquith, who obtained over 9,000 votes.

The transfer of this surplus might have been effected in a very simple way, viz., by taking a number of votes equal to the surplus from the top of his bundle and re-sorting these papers according to the next preferences.

It is held by mathematicians that when large numbers of votes are being dealt with, and the papers are well mixed—and they are well mixed by the simultaneous sortings which take place in an election of this kind—that the portion of votes taken from the top of Mr. Asquith's bundle would, on the average, be representative of all his votes.

This opinion was expressed by the late Professor G. Stokes, Secretary of the Royal Society and Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge, the Right Hon. James Parker Smith, and others. Mr. G. U. Yule, of the Royal Statistical Society, in evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, considered this simple method sufficient.

The criticism, however, has often been made that with this simple process the number of votes to be transferred to each next preference depends upon chance.

The element of chance involved is more apparent than real, but the criticism can be met, and was met, at the model election, without interfering with the practicability of the single transferable vote.

At the election, the whole of Mr. Asquith's votes were analysed afresh, made up into new bundles, according to the names of the next preferences, and to each next preference there was transferred his proportionate share of the surplus.

At the model election the process of transfer was effected as follows:—

1. The names of successful candidates were removed from the pigeon holes.
2. All the papers proper to Mr. Asquith were taken from his box on the returning officer's table and placed upon the sorting table.
3. The sorters re-sorted these papers according to fresh instructions as follows:—

Sort the ballot papers according to the highest available preference.

When no further preference is indicated, place the ballot paper in the compartment marked "Exhausted."

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[Continued.]

4. The papers as sorted were taken to the counting tables.
5. The counters checked the sorting of the papers, placing mis-sorts on one side as before, and made the papers up into bundles of 50. The counting was again checked.
6. A transfer card was placed with each bundle of 50, showing the name of the candidate whose papers were being re-sorted, and also the name of the candidate who had been marked by the electors as their next choice.
7. The papers were taken to the returning officer's table and placed in a second row of boxes which were labelled to correspond with the pigeon holes.
8. At the conclusion of the process the second row of boxes contained the whole of Mr. Asquith's votes; one box containing the exhausted votes—those on which no further preference had been indicated; the next box containing those on which Mr. Burt had been indicated as the electors' next choice, the next Lord Hugh Cecil, and so on.
9. The number of votes in each box was ascertained by the returning officer's assistants and recorded on a transfer sheet. (*Specimen submitted.*)
10. It was now the duty of the returning officer's assistants to divide the votes in each of the boxes into two portions—one consisting of the votes to be transferred and the other the portion not to be transferred. This statement does not apply to the box in which the exhausted votes were placed, because none of these votes could be transferred.

The line of division was ascertained by means of calculations to which reference has been made; the number of votes in each box, already entered on the transfer sheet, was multiplied by a fraction which represented the proportion which the number of surplus votes bore to the number of papers on which next preferences had been marked.

The transfer sheet was so printed as to give a clear indication as to the way in which the calculation should be made.

The fraction in the model election was $\frac{5432}{9006}$.

The calculations were made and checked, and the results entered into the second and third columns of the transfer sheet.

These calculations, if desired, could be further checked by the use of such apparatus as the slide rule, &c.

The division of votes in each box was then made, and the portions to be transferred were transferred to the respective candidates by being placed with the original votes of the said candidates.

The portions not transferred, including the exhausted votes, were placed in the box labelled with Mr. Asquith's name, and represented the quota of electors sufficient to ensure his election. These votes were not again dealt with.

The net result of these operations was entered upon the returning officer's result sheet in the columns provided for the purpose.

This operation necessarily takes longer than the simple process of transferring the votes last placed in Mr. Asquith's box, but each part of the more detailed process is simple in itself, and presents no difficulty in practice.

11. At the conclusion of the process, only one row of boxes contained ballot papers, and the number of votes in the boxes corresponded with the state of the poll indicated by the returning officer's result sheet:—

At the model election Mr. Balfour as well as Mr. Asquith obtained an excess of votes, and Mr. Balfour's surplus was transferred in the same way. The necessary sortings, countings, and calculations were made, and the result entered upon the returning officer's result sheet.

At the conclusion of this further transfer the numbers of votes in the boxes again corresponded with the state of the poll as then indicated on the result sheet.

Fourth Process.—Candidates elected as the Result of the Transfer of Surplus Votes.

At the conclusion of every transfer every candidate whose total number of votes, as the result of the transfer, has been brought above the quota is declared elected. In the model election Mr. Lloyd George, after the transfer of Mr. Asquith's surplus, had more than a quota of votes, and was declared elected.

More votes had been transferred from Mr. Asquith to Mr. Lloyd George than were sufficient for the election of the latter, and the surplus thus created was carried forward to the further preferences of the electors.

The 4,704 votes transferred to Mr. Lloyd George were analysed in the careful manner detailed, and the necessary calculations made.

The results were entered upon the result sheet, and at the conclusion of the process the numbers of the votes in the boxes corresponded with the state of the poll then reached.

Successive Elimination of Unsuccessful Candidates.

The further part of the returning officer's work was quite simple. Three members had been elected, and there remained nine candidates, none of whom had obtained a quota of votes. Two more members were required, and in order to ascertain which of the nine candidates should be declared elected, the votes of the candidate lowest on the poll were transferred in accordance with the wishes indicated by the electors. No calculations were required, and the result of the sorting, after being entered upon a transfer sheet, which in this case assumed a very simple form, were entered upon the result sheet.

In the model election the votes of two candidates were transferred in one operation because the combined total of their votes was less than that of the next lowest candidate.

After the completion of each transfer the number of votes in the boxes and as shown on the result sheet were in agreement.

After the votes of six candidates, viz., Messrs. Joynson-Hicks, F. E. Smith, D. Shackleton, Lord Hugh Cecil, Leif Jones, and Walter Long, had been transferred in this way there remained only six boxes containing votes. Three of these bore the names of Mr. Asquith, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. Lloyd George, each containing a full quota of votes. The other three, bearing the names of Messrs. T. Burt, A. Henderson, and J. R. Macdonald, contained less than the quota, the smallest number being that of Mr. Henderson. Mr. Henderson was declared not elected, but the process of transferring his votes was not carried through, as it would not have affected the final result.

The remaining candidates, Messrs. T. Burt and J. R. Macdonald, were declared elected.

Had Mr. Henderson's votes been transferred each of the successful candidates would have been shown with the full quota of votes.

The declaration of the successful candidates concluded the returning officer's task.

The Practicability of the Single Transferable Vote.

1. From the voter's point of view. False impressions as to the number of spoiled votes.

Experience in model elections.

Experience in parliamentary elections in Tasmania. The authoritative report of the Tasmanian returning officer.

2. From the point of view of the returning officer.

The Tasmanian returning officer's report again the most authoritative statement.

The model election showed that there was no practical difficulty in carrying out such an election.

Time and Staff required.

Every departure from rough-and-ready methods must involve more care and probably more time.

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[Continued.]

The additional time required by the single transferable vote is not such as to make it impracticable.

Twenty-one thousand six hundred and ninety votes were dealt with in the course of six hours.

In a parliamentary election the number of votes cast for a town like Birmingham would be about 70,000, and, with proper organisation, it would be possible to count these votes in the course of a full day.

It might be desirable to engage the staff for a longer time, but there is no reason why the task should not be accomplished, especially if the verification of the contents of the ballot boxes was completed on the previous evening.

The result of the first count is ascertained very quickly. This result usually gives a clear indication of the final results, at least, from the party point of view. All the operations in connection with the first count of 21,690 votes at the model election of 1908 was completed in an hour and a quarter.

A staff of 45, apart from the returning officers, was engaged for the model election at Caxton Hall. This staff would be sufficient to cope with a much larger task. The work does not increase in the same ratio as the number of votes; the time engaged in making the calculations at each stage differ but slightly.

No increase in the cost of organising elections. Birmingham, with a system of single-member constituencies, requires a separate staff for conduct of an election in each electoral division. With the new system one staff only required, although this staff would be larger than any of the staffs required for separate divisions.

Frivolous Candidatures.

There would not be much difficulty in disposing of the small number of votes polled by candidates who have no real support. Such candidates, however, involve the provision of needless compartments for purposes of sorting.

Frivolous candidatures are guarded against in the Tasmanian Act by the appropriation of money deposited with nomination; Article 68 reads as follows:—

(1) When a poll takes place at any election the deposit made with the returning officer as aforesaid by or on behalf of every candidate who fails to receive at the poll—

- (a) where more than one member is to be returned, a number of votes at the time of his exclusion from the poll, not less than one-fifth of the quota, as defined in Schedule IV.;
- (b) where one member only is to be returned, a number of votes, not less than one-fifth part of the votes received by the successful candidate—

shall be forfeited to His Majesty and be paid by the returning officer into the Treasury, and form part of the consolidated revenue fund.

(2) After every election the returning officer shall return to every candidate:—

- (a) who has been returned without a poll; or
- (b) who has withdrawn his consent to his nomination under the provision of this Act; or
- (c) who has not forfeited his deposit under subsection (1) of this section—

the deposit made with the returning officer as aforesaid by or on behalf of every such candidate.

In Belgium a list, even if it consists of but one candidate, must be presented by at least 100 qualified citizens. In order to ensure that the presentation of the list conforms to the law, the lists are, as a rule, signed by more than 100 electors.

The Fairness of the Results.

Diagrams submitted showing, from the party point of view, the number of votes polled and the number of seats obtained in the model elections of 1906 and 1908.

These results show that each party obtained representation as nearly as possible in proportion to its strength. With the present single-member constituency system the result would have depended upon the way in which the voting strength of parties had been distributed.

The fairness of the results more than justifies the additional labour involved; no system which will give accurate results can be devised which will not involve some additional labour.

The processes involved in the single transferable vote have been demonstrated to be quite practicable.

165. (*Chairman.*) You are Secretary of the Proportional Representation Society?—Yes.

166. You were chiefly responsible for the two test elections in 1906 and 1908?—That is so; elections in which we had the assistance of the Press very considerably; the results were published.

167. From your memorandum I see you have had a certain amount of experience in ordinary political and municipal elections?—Yes, in watching the details of the elections.

168. I think the best plan will be for you to give a practical demonstration of how the system is actually worked?—I will begin by making a brief reference to the polling proceedings. In an election with the single transferable vote, the polling proceedings will be the same as at present with one slight modification, and that would be in the form of the ballot-paper. I think the members of the Commission have had copies of the ballot-paper before them. The chief modification made in the ballot-paper is to enable the electors to express their preferences by marking the names of the candidates with the figures 1, 2 and 3, in the order of their choice. The ballot-papers would be handed out by the presiding officer at the polling place, and the elector would mark his ballot-paper in a private compartment as at present. The instructions to the elector would be slightly varied. A ballot-paper will be spoiled if the figure 1 is not marked or is set opposite the name of more than one candidate, or if the figure 1 and some other figure is set opposite the name of the same candidate.

169. (*Lord Locher.*) Is that stated in the instructions to the voter?—It would be printed in the instructions. The instructions are posted up in the polling places, and the necessary alterations would appear therein. Then with regard to the counting of the votes, the proceedings would commence as at present by a verification of the contents of the ballot-boxes. The ballot-boxes are at present opened in the presence of the returning officer and the papers therein counted, and if any discrepancy exists between the number of papers in the ballot-box and the account furnished by the presiding officer, an investigation is at once made into the discrepancy. It is the duty of the returning officer to see that all ballot-papers issued have been accounted for. The number of votes polled, ascertained in this way, would form the basis of all subsequent proceedings. It would act as a check upon the accuracy of the results at every stage. Now the counting of votes at the present time consists of the sorting and counting of ballot-papers, but although that is so, and one may say it is a very simple operation, in the organisation of an election the returning officer is necessarily assisted by an expert staff. The returning officer is very often the mayor of a town, and probably has never had any practical experience in the organisation of elections, and he necessarily calls upon the staff at his disposal, in the department of the town clerk, in order to assist him in the carrying out of the election. With the single transferable vote the same conditions would obtain with this difference, that in addition to the staff for sorting and the counting of the papers the returning officer should have amongst his expert staff two assistants capable of doing sums in proportion. I have mentioned in my memorandum that sums in proportion are taught in every elementary school throughout the kingdom. Although that is so, I suggest that these two assistants should be men acquainted with and experienced in figures, so that the necessary calculations may be carried through with promptitude and certainty, so as to give perfect satisfaction. I have mentioned two assistants; two are required in order to check each other's work, and in the course of the demonstration I hope to show that every portion of the work is checked automatically.

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[Continued.]

The next important point to which I wish to direct attention is the arrangement of the room. I submit a plan of the room as arranged for the purpose of the model election in last December. The idea governing the organisation of the room was that the different branches of the work—the sorting, the counting of ballot papers, and the calculations made at the returning officer's table—should be kept quite distinct. This was effected by allotting separate tables to the sorters, to the counters, and to the returning officer's assistants. The staff engaged in those various duties remained at their posts, and the connection between the three branches of work was made by messengers, whose names are indicated upon the plan of the room as standing between the sorting tables and the checking and counting tables. The messengers carried the papers, when sorted, to the counting tables, and, when counted into bundles, carried them to the returning officer's table, and at the same time submitted all doubtful votes to the returning officer: so that each officer engaged attended to his own particular piece of work, and every portion of the work, therefore, went quite smoothly.

170. (*Chairman.*) Each candidate had one table to himself?—That is so; but in the case of a popular candidate, such as Mr. Asquith, several tables were allotted to him. The popular candidate would be soon found out, or probably the returning officer would give a shrewd guess as to who was likely to be the more popular candidate, and allot additional space for the purpose. Now, the first process in carrying out an election with the single transferable vote was the sorting of the papers according to the candidates marked with the figure 1, and for this purpose there were a dozen sets of pigeon-holes, exactly like the one in front of you, placed upon a table in the centre of the room. Each sorter was instructed to sort the papers according to the names marked 1. Printed instructions were placed on the top of the pigeon holes to "Sort the ballot-papers according to the names marked 1," and "Place spoiled or doubtful papers on top of the case (right-hand side)." Those instructions were given so that the sorters might proceed with their work without asking unnecessary questions.

171. Each sorter at one of those sets of pigeon-holes?—That is so; so there were a dozen, or even more, sorters engaged simultaneously in carrying out the process of sorting and putting the papers in the pigeon-holes. Doubtful or spoiled papers were placed on the top and were taken by the messenger to the returning officer for his decision. For instance, here is a spoiled ballot-paper in which the figure 1 appears against the names of three candidates. Here is another one in which the figure 1 appears against the names of three candidates, and one in which two crosses appear upon the ballot-paper. (*Papers shown.*)

172. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) What was the gross poll at the model election?—There were 21,690 votes in which there were 18 spoiled papers. Of these three were deliberately spoiled, that is to say, the name of Mr. Victor Grayson was written upon one, and the figures 0, 0, were placed against candidates' names on other papers, evidently showing that the persons voting wished to make game of the proceedings rather than attend to the instructions.

173. There were only 18 spoiled papers in 21,690 votes?—Yes; 18,000 of those papers came from the Press.

174. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) Were the majority of the 15 papers spoiled by having more than one 1?—Yes, or by placing crosses against the names of the candidates instead of carrying out the instructions. Here is a ballot-paper which might cause some doubt in the mind of the sorter, and, if so, would be placed upon the top of the case with the spoiled papers, but it would be a good vote. The figure 1 appears against the name of a candidate, and therefore the vote is recorded for that candidate, but it would be impossible, according to the rules of the Municipal Representation Bill, to transfer that vote because of the defective numbering that occurred after the figure 1. It would, however, be a good vote so far as the figure 1 was concerned.

175. (*Lord Lochee.*) By the omission of 2, 3, 4?—Yes, the vote could not be transferred to a second preference, because it had not been indicated, but the figure 1 was placed against the name of Asquith, and was recorded for him. The next figure marked was 5.

176. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) How long did it take to count the 21,600 votes?—1½ hours.

177. That is the first count?—That is the first count. That included the process of sorting, and the further process to which I desire to direct your attention.

178. (*Lord Lochee.*) Will you let me look at an actual ballot-paper?—Here is a packet of ballot-papers that were used at the model election; you will observe that in some cases voters marked 12 preferences.

179. That is the very point I wanted to get at?—The papers vary very considerably. Here is one of the bundles of 50.

180. That is the sort of thing that would be likely to occur in an actual election?—I think there would be a proportion of voters who would utilise all the preferences.

181. Some who would not throw anything away?—Yes, there would be a proportion. In this election only a small proportion exercised 12 preferences; the majority of voters were content with half a dozen.

182. The voter in an ordinary election for two members, who gives his votes for three candidates, would spoil the ballot-paper?—Not under the single transferable vote system.

183. No, but in an ordinary election for two members he would?—Yes.

184. If he voted for three candidates that would be a spoiled paper?—Yes.

185. Equivalent to that in your system is the man who votes for everybody?—No, he is permitted by the single transferable vote to indicate as many preferences as he desires, and therefore the paper would not be spoiled as long as the figure 1 was plainly marked against some one candidate.

186. But it would be rather an irrational paper?—I do not think so—not if the voter had no real preference for any one else. I think I shall make it plain a little later on that such votes do really count, or the vast majority of them do, towards determining the result of the election. As this process of sorting was going on, the papers were taken by the messengers to the counting tables. The papers placed in the compartment marked "Asquith," and in the corresponding compartments in the other pigeon-holes were taken to the table allotted to Mr. Asquith; Mr. Balfour's papers to another table, and so on. The ballot-papers were then counted with bundles of 50. Printed instructions had been issued to the counters, and were placed upon the table on the occasion of the election, so that they might refresh their memories with the details of the duty allotted to them. Now, the first duty of the counter was to look at every paper that was brought to him, and to make quite sure—speaking, say, of the papers sorted to Mr. Lloyd George—that the figure 1 had been marked against the name of Mr. Lloyd George. In other words, he was to look through his papers to see that there were no mis-sorts—to check the sorting of the papers. All mis-sorts discovered were placed by the counter at the side of his table, and taken back by the messenger to the sorting table.

187. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) There is nothing novel so far as you have gone?—Nothing.

188. Everything you have described would be pertinent to an ordinary election at the present time?—That is so.

189. (*Chairman.*) Did you find, from actual experience, that there were many mistakes made in sorting?—No, very few mistakes were made in sorting; in fact, it was remarkably well done. When Mr. Asquith's papers were subsequently analysed for the purpose of transferring his surplus, it was found that there had only been one mis-sort in a packet of 9,042 papers. There were two other mis-sorts found in the subsequent stages of the proceedings, which, however, created no difficulty. They were carried forward to the proper candidate. The sorting was done practically perfectly.

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190. Do you think the actual sorters whom you had then would be better than the ordinary sorters at an ordinary election?—I do not think so, because I submit that the process of sorting according to the figure marked "1," with pigeon holes of this kind, is not a difficult operation. It is quite true that on this occasion we had the assistance of post-office sorters, but the work which would fall to a post-office sorter would be much more complicated than this particular piece of work. I would point out that the process of sorting is, in any Government Department, regarded as one of the most elementary tasks.

191. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) They probably did the work more quickly?—Probably; but I submit that the operation of sorting according to the names marked "1" is not a difficult operation. After the sorting had been checked, the papers were made up into bundles of 50 and, with a coloured card bearing the name of the candidate, were enclosed in an elastic band and carried by the messenger to the returning officer's table and placed in a row of boxes—much larger than these in front of you, which are only models. To each box was attached a label with the candidate's name to which the box was appropriated (*illustrating*). I should explain that as the sorting was checked, so each stage of the counting was checked. The instructions to the counters were to count each bundle twice. Here I admit quite freely that our counting was not quite so accurate as our sorting was on that occasion. The reason why our counting was not quite accurate was due to the fact that, although we had asked our friends in the Press to provide us with ballot papers of a size somewhat similar to that of the pattern supplied to them, the papers received showed a very considerable variation. For instance, *that* was the ballot paper from one newspaper, and *that* was the next type of ballot paper we had to deal with, easily hidden underneath the other ballot paper; and here is another type (*producing various ballot papers*). You can quite see how very difficult it was to ensure accurate counting with such papers. On this occasion we were 12 numbers out in the resorting of Mr. Asquith's papers. In an ordinary election I should have had those recounted at once, but with ballot papers varying so much in size as these, I felt quite confident that I should not get an absolutely accurate count with 21,000, and I did not proceed to do what would have been done in an ordinary election. I want to point out that this is really one of the advantages of this scheme—that every error, either in sorting or counting is discovered and can be corrected before you pass on to any subsequent stage. One could very well strengthen the instructions by asking the counters to check each other's work, because, as you will observe from the plan of the room, these counters were working in pairs. One could at least instruct them to satisfy themselves that each bundle contained 50 votes and no more before passing it on for collection. I am quite confident that with papers of a uniform size and thickness our counting on that occasion would have been as absolutely accurate as our sorting. At the conclusion of this stage all the votes will be found to be in the boxes placed upon the returning officer's table, each box containing the votes proper to the candidate whose name appeared thereon. It was the duty of the returning officer's assistants to ascertain how many votes were contained in each box. They were assisted by the fact that these votes had already been made into bundles of 50. Whilst these bundles were coming in the assistants made them up into bundles of 500, and, by that means, quickly ascertained the totals of the votes contained in each box.

192. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) There were two assistants for that work?—Two assistants; but if I were organising the same election again I would have four.

193. Your total staff was 47, I think?—Forty-five. Not merely for the purpose of ascertaining the number of votes in each box, but for other pieces of work which fell to them, it is desirable that the staff at the returning officer's table should be increased. The votes were entered in the first column of the result sheet, a copy of which, I think, has been furnished to each Commissioner. I have brought the sheets which were actually used on the occasion of the model

election by the returning officer's assistants, containing their rough work. So far, as has been remarked, there has been no difference from the procedure followed in an ordinary election. In an ordinary election the candidates who had obtained the largest number of votes would have been declared elected. Here the first real divergence from the present practice took place. The total number of valid votes polled was ascertained and divided by 6 for the purpose of ascertaining the quota. There were on this occasion five members to be elected. With the single transferable vote a candidate has not to obtain a majority of the votes. A certain definite proportion of the votes entitles him to election. The rule for finding the quota is very simply explained by a reference to the practice which obtains at present. In a single-member constituency, a candidate who obtains a bare majority of votes, that is one more than half, is certain of election. So with the single transferable vote a candidate in a two-member election, who obtains just over a third of the votes, is sure of election. There is a mathematical justification for the rule, but I think this simple explanation sufficiently indicates the way in which the quota is arrived at. The rule involves a simple division sum, and I submit that that is not difficult. The result was ascertained independently by the two assistants to the returning officer, and after they had checked each other's work the quota was announced by the returning officer as being 3,613. At the model election, the returning officer at once declared elected all the candidates who had received more than the quota of votes. These, on the occasion of that model election, were Mr. Asquith and Mr. Balfour.

194. (*Chairman.*) Of course to decide the seniority of the members elected straight away, you take the largest number of votes?—That is so; the seniority depends upon the order in which the candidates are elected.

195. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) The people who get the first preference would always come out at the head of the poll—those elected on the first count?—Yes, the candidates who are declared elected on the first count must have obtained more than a quota of first preferences.

196. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) More, or the quota?—The quota.

197. So anybody with 3,613 votes would have been elected?—Yes.

198. It is not the quota plus 1?—We have already added 1 in determining the quota. The next process is perhaps the most difficult part, if it can be described as difficult.

199. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Why do you deduct from Mr. Asquith's votes as many as will leave him 3,617, and not merely 3,613?—Because in the proportionate transfer of surpluses there arise certain fractions. It was found, taking the case of Mr. Burt, that there were 282 votes to be transferred to him; it should have been 282 and a fraction; for Lord Hugh Cecil 79 votes and a fraction, and so on. The sum of those fractions accounts for the difference between Mr. Asquith's total of 3,617, and the quota, 3,613, namely, four votes.

200. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) But you have to know how many votes to transfer from Mr. Asquith before you knew the proportionate transfer to each candidate?—Yes. If I may go through the process of transfer I shall come to the particular point to which attention has been directed.

201. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Before leaving this point, the gross number of votes, 21,672, in the first column, is made up of every preference given to every candidate?—No, it only includes first preferences.

202. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) The number of ballot papers?—The number of ballot papers.

203. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) So that the number of preferences exercised has no effect on the quota whatever?—No. May I make it quite clear by directing attention to the difference between a vote and a preference. The vote is recorded by marking the figure 1 against the name of a candidate. The preferences, 2, 3, and so on, only come into play in certain contingencies. They are not votes in the first place;

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they are only votes in the contingencies to which I shall direct attention. Therefore each ballot paper stands for one vote, and in ascertaining the number of votes, account is taken only of candidates marked with the figure 1.

204. I only wanted to be quite sure that the exercise or non-exercise of the preference had no effect on the quota?—That is quite true. It has no effect on the quota.

205. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Is every voter perfectly sure of having either a first preference or some other preference counted and actually made use of?—No; for instance in this case there are five seats to be filled. The quota is ascertained by dividing by 6 and adding 1 to the quotient. Therefore five quotas amount to less than the total number of votes, and there must be a residuum, which is less than a quota, which does not secure representation under this system. It is not in this respect a perfect system, it is only an approximation towards perfection.

206. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) In the case of a man who, in voting, puts as the first man upon his ballot paper a man who has a large surplus to be transferred, like Mr. Asquith in this case, and for his second preference the only preference he indicates is for a man who also has got far above the quota in his first vote—in such a ballot paper the preference would be quite useless?—The preference would be quite useless, but not the vote.

207. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) But that is his fault, because he has not exercised all his preferences. What I want to point out is that a man may exercise all his preferences, and yet it is conceivable his vote might not be used?—No, I do not think so—not if he exercised all his preferences.

208. How about the residuum of people whose votes cannot be used at all? Some of those might be men who had exercised their preferences?—No, I do not think so.

209. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) But his vote would have been exhausted in the first instance. He had given it to somebody?—Although improbable, some papers so marked may not count. The particular voter of whom you speak may have indicated his first preference for a candidate who has been eliminated, and it may be transferred to another candidate who is also unsuccessful, and finally lodged with that candidate—in this particular case it was Mr. Henderson—who, at the end of the proceedings, is declared not elected. There is a residuum of voters, less than a quota, who may have marked their papers in any way whatever, to whom it is impossible to give representation; they are not entitled to it because they are not numerous enough.

210. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You mean it is at any rate much better than the present system?—Undoubtedly; that is to say, the per-centage of voters not represented is reduced enormously. Now I come to the more difficult part of the process. Every candidate who has received more than the quota, or the quota, of votes, is declared elected—in the model election Mr. Asquith and Mr. Balfour. It became then the duty of the returning officer to transfer the surplus votes of those candidates who received more than the quota to those unelected candidates indicated on the ballot paper as the next choice of the electors, whose votes are being dealt with. The object, as Lord Courtney has explained, is to prevent the waste of voting power. An unnecessarily large number of votes might be polled by a popular candidate. The transfer of this surplus might have been effected in a very simple way by taking a number of votes equal to the surplus from the top of Mr. Asquith's bundle and re-sorting these papers according to the next preference.

211. (*Lord Loches.*) What do you call Mr. Asquith's surplus?—Here are Mr. Asquith's votes (*pointing to box*).

212. 5,425?—All his votes; including the surplus.

213. But how is the surplus determined?—We have already ascertained the quota, and the surplus represents the number of votes which he has obtained more than the quota.

214. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) What do you do in the particular instance to ascertain Mr. Asquith's surplus; you subtract the quota from his pile?—If we can leave that point, I think it will come out in the later explanation. We will assume that we are dealing with his full surplus—5,429 instead of 5,425. The simplest way would have been to have taken those 5,429 votes from the top of Mr. Asquith's bundle and re-sorted them according to the next preference. That very simple principle, I think, is embodied in Mr. Morrison's Bill of 1872.

215. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) It makes very little difference which you do?—Extremely little difference. That was the opinion of Professor Stokes, and in this matter I do not speak as a mathematical expert, but simply speak of a principle fairly well known and acted upon by all insurance companies—that if you are dealing with a very large number of risks you can safely accept those risks by working according to an authorised table.

216. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) Would you consider 21,000 for such a case as that, when a very small error would be sufficient to alter the result of your election, a large enough number?—I think 21,000 would be quite large enough for us to act in accordance with the simple process. But on this point I qualify my statement by saying I am not speaking as a mathematician, and I prefer that all evidence on that particular point should be taken from someone who is qualified to give an answer that is of value. This same simple process has been approved by the Right Honourable James Parker Smith, who was a mathematician of repute and a Smith's Prizeman. It is noteworthy that the only statistician who appeared before the Select Committee of the House of Lords complained that we had unnecessarily elaborated our process by introducing a more perfect system of transfer.

217. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) In Tasmania they did adopt a more elaborate process in order to meet that point. Mr. Clark thought it necessary?—Yes, he thought it necessary, and it was carried out quite successfully, and we have carried it out. It is a system which we have shown to be quite practicable.

218. (*Chairman.*) Have you found your first suggestion of simply taking the top of the bundle meet with hostile criticism?—It met with hostile criticism. So, therefore, the process now followed is to take the whole of the papers in Mr. Asquith's box and analyse them afresh. For that purpose the names of the candidates who are elected are removed from the pigeon-holes, so that no paper shall be transferred to a candidate who is already elected. Compartments which have formerly been used for Mr. Asquith and Mr. Balfour are re-labelled one "exhausted" to receive exhausted papers, and the other "boards" for the purpose of receiving boards no longer required. This is done merely to keep matters in perfect order. I will not go through, except extremely briefly, this process of resorting. Fresh instructions were given at this stage to the sorters: "Sort the ballot-papers according to the "highest available preference," and "When no further preference is indicated, place the ballot paper in the "compartment marked exhausted." The exhausted papers were those on which no further preference was marked.

219. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) The exhausted papers would include papers on which Mr. Balfour's name came second?—That is so. There are one or two here of that description. Here is one so marked on the occasion of the model election. Here is another one which was also marked Asquith 1 and Balfour 2. The others were papers in which the figure 1 only had been marked against Mr. Asquith's name. I probably ought to have explained before, but doubtless it has already been noted, that I have only six boxes in a row instead of 12. I thought it unnecessary to produce 12 boxes, but at the election we did have 12 boxes, one for each candidate. We will assume that this process of re-sorting and counting had been accomplished. The ballot papers were then taken from the counting tables to the returning officer's table and placed in a second row of boxes labelled to correspond exactly with the pigeon-holes; that is to say

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the names of the elected candidates, Mr. Balfour and Mr. Asquith, had been removed from these boxes, and the words "Exhausted" and "Boards" put in their place. The ballot papers were placed in these boxes, and Mr. Burt's papers were taken and placed in the compartment marked with the name of Mr. Burt. Lord Hugh Cecil's were placed in the compartment marked with his name, Mr. Lloyd George's were placed in the compartment marked with his name, and Mr. Henderson's papers were placed in the compartment marked with his name. Now, at the conclusion of that process, there were no papers whatever in Mr. Asquith's original compartment. All his papers were in this second row of boxes. According to the simple process of transfer we should have taken the surplus from the top of Mr. Asquith's bundle, and left in his box a number of votes equal to the quota. In the model election the returning officer divided each of the new bundles in such a way that the portion transferred from each box, and the portion not transferred, but left for Mr. Asquith, bore the same proportion. The line of division is ascertained by means of the calculations to which reference has been made. These transfer sheets show the calculations that were made in distributing Mr. Asquith's surplus. The number of votes in each of these second row of boxes was recorded in the first column of the transfer sheet. The exhausted preferences were shown separately, the papers containing no further preferences being placed in the box so marked. The surplus was 5,429, and that was the number which we had to transfer. The total number of papers in the boxes bearing candidates' names was 9,009. That was the total number of Mr. Asquith's votes, less the papers on which no preference had been shown.

220. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) Less also the exhausted preferences?—Less those papers on which no further preferences had been shown.

221. But there were some papers which showed a preference for Mr. Balfour?—They are treated in the same way.

222. (*Chairman.*) They are exhausted?—They are all exhausted preferences, Mr. Balfour having been already elected. They are shown on the last line but one of the transfer sheet—33.

223. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) I should like to have on the shorthand notes the number of exhausted papers at the first count of the 21,600 votes, in order to show how many people out of the 21,600 voters did not exercise the right of preference?—I think we can get a very clear indication of that. We analysed the two surpluses.

224. Just bear the point in mind and go on with your explanation?—Yes, I see the point to which you refer.

225. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Why is the figure 5,429 and not 5,425?—That is due to neglect of fractions in transfers. I will deal with that point now. We assume we are going to transfer 5,429 papers, and therefore the number in the multiplying fraction is 5,429, the full surplus. At this stage we do not know the number 5,425, and are only aware of the surplus 5,429. We multiplied each of the figures in the first column of the result sheet by the fraction $\frac{5,429}{5,425}$. In each case the process of multiplication yields a whole number plus a small fraction. Each of these numbers in the second column should, to be quite accurate, show a small fraction, all of which added together amount to four votes. We cannot transfer a fraction of a paper and can only deal with whole papers, and the discrepancy arises from that fact. If it is desired to meet the criticism, that this is not quite intelligible to the ordinary reader, we could adjust those numbers so as to make the total 5,429, that is to say, we can increase the numbers transferred by 1 in the case of the larger fractions. I do not know whether I have made that point quite clear. If the number to be transferred in Mr. Burt's case is 282 and a fraction amounting to nearly a whole number, we could transfer 283, but specific instructions would have to be embodied in a Bill for that purpose. At present the instruction to the returning officer is that he must neglect fractions in carrying out transfers.

226. And take the lowest whole number?—Yes.

227. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) Not the nearest whole number?—No, not the nearest whole number. That, I think, is a very small point. Now, having ascertained how many votes are to be transferred, the returning officer counts from each of those bundles the number required and transfers them. In this case there are 282 to be transferred to Mr. Burt, and they are placed upon the top of Mr. Burt's papers, the same process with Lord Hugh Cecil's, the same with Mr. Henderson's, and the same with Mr. Lloyd George's.

228. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) In transferring the votes to Mr. Burt, for instance, you pick out by chance the ones that you give him?—That is so.

229. And you do not go any further and select the third and fourth preferences?—No.

230. In fact, that would be almost unworkable?—I would not like to go as far as that, because the present Tasmanian Bill provides that that should be done.

231. How far?—Right to the end.

232. To the end of the scale?—To the end of the scale; but in view of the mathematical opinions that have been expressed we think it is really wasting time, and I have had a note from Professor Jethro Brown, in which he informs me that this decision was arrived at by the Tasmanian Government, in the absence of the Tasmanian statistician, who is certainly of opinion that the work involved by that more exact process is quite unnecessary.

233. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You are now dealing with a far smaller number of votes than 21,000?—Yes.

234. Something like 468?—Yes.

235. And you are still informed by your statisticians that the chance is negligible?—Quite so.

236. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) But if you sorted one-third of the papers out you would get one-third of the 468?—Yes. The more elaborate process is not justified by any additional accuracy in the final result.

237. Then in 670 seats under the present system, why do not the irregularities and unfairness in one constituency balance the unfairness in another in the election of the majority? One of the great reasons why supporters of proportional representation attack the present system is that you may have unfair results from 670 constituencies—that you do not get the absolute majority of the people represented by the returns in 670 cases?—Because under our present system there is no attempt to get an accurate or true representation. With the system of the single transferable vote what we aim at, and do secure, as I hope to show at the conclusion, is a fair and just representation within a given area; and by building up from true pictures, as it were, of different areas, you do approximate to a much truer representation of the whole nation within the House of Commons. That is shown undoubtedly by the results of all proportional systems that so far have been tried.

238. Under the present system it has been shown to be possible that a minority of people can secure a majority of constituencies. Now, if it were the case, as you suggest, that inequalities correct themselves when there is a bundle of as many as 470 votes to be taken out of a larger bundle, and a proportion of, say, one-third of 470 to be taken, then why should this inequality not be correct in the case of 670 single constituencies, and why should you have these inequalities so that a swamping majority in one constituency is beaten by four small majorities in four neighbouring constituencies, say?—I do not think that the two things are on quite the same basis. We, by our process, adjust within any given area, the action of the swamping majority producing a false result, and by adjusting it within a given area, we do build up an approximation to accurate representation—I say it is only an approximation. I have never said, and I do not think any proportionalist would say, that you are going to get an absolutely accurate representation of the people by a proportional system. We can only approximate towards that ideal. The great object of the system is to ensure that within any given area the different forces within that area obtain a reasonably fair share of the representation.

239. I have not made myself clear. I am not discussing the general fairness of proportional

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representation. I am discussing this question of the certainty of your getting a fair proportion of the preferences for Mr. Burt, say, when there are 470 preferences lying in a great pile of papers of some thousands. Yet, you tell me, if you take the first one-third of those thousands, you will get one-third of 470 preferences for Mr. Burt. I say the number is far too small?—I would prefer that evidence from a mathematical point of view should be taken from a mathematician as such, because I think his word would come with much more weight than it would come from me in dealing with this point.

240. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) The actual result of this election was that the first count resulted in a large surplus for Mr. Lloyd George?—Yes.

241. And therefore a large surplus had to be transferred from Mr. Lloyd George to other preferences?—Yes.

242. It might be quite possible that one vote would make the difference between one of the lower preferences, if I may term it so, being elected or not elected?—I should not like to say. The chances that it would not happen would be enormous.

243. It is possible in any case that the preference to any particular person might bring his vote up to 3,614, or 3,612?—I think there is that possibility, but, as I say, I think the possibility is extremely small, as shown by the more expert calculations which have been made by the mathematicians.

244. (Sir Charles Eliot.) What is the objection to distributing all the first preferences instead of multiplying them by this fraction as you have done. Clearly, some people will have two effective votes?—If we were to transfer all preferences it would mean a complete alteration of our system—a system in which electors have only one vote, and give indications of the way in which they desire that vote to be transferred—If we were to take into consideration all preferences these preferences would rank as votes, and the system would then be one in which each elector, instead of having one vote with preferences, would have, say, five votes if five members were to be elected.

245. Some of them would have several votes?—If all preferences were to be taken into account, instructions would at once come from the party organisations to exercise preferences up to the total number of candidates to be elected, and there would be no difference in the result to what would take place if each elector had as many votes as there were members to be elected—in other words, the *scrutin de liste* would be substituted for the single transferable vote.

246. It would be immediately a party list?—Yes, I did not complete the process of the distribution of Mr. Asquith's surplus. We carried forward the surplus papers to the boxes labelled with the respective candidates' names. The papers that were left constituted Mr. Asquith's quota, and the numbers correspond with the third column in the transfer sheet. Mr. Burt, 186; Lord Hugh Cecil, 53; Mr. Henderson, 104; Mr. Lloyd George, 3,103; these, together with the exhausted votes, made up the number of papers that were retained for the purpose of constituting Mr. Asquith's quota. I would like to remark that, at the conclusion of each process, the papers in this front row of boxes corresponded with the returning officer's result sheet. The particulars of the transfer had been entered upon the result sheet, and the result was shown in the next column, and that result corresponded with the number of votes in the boxes. Then Mr. Balfour's surplus was distributed in the same way. The calculations were made afresh on a different transfer sheet, and the division of the contents of the boxes was made on the basis of the new calculations—three votes were transferred to Mr. Henderson, 195 to Lord Hugh Cecil, and 12 to Mr. Burt. The remainders of the votes were placed in the original compartment marked with the name of Mr. Balfour.

247. (Chairman.) They were done in a proportion?—In exactly the same way as Mr. Asquith's—but a different fraction. The original sheets, as used at the election by the returning officer's assistants, give the details. Each of the returning officer's assistants

had one of these sheets, made the calculations and checked one another's work.

248. Did these calculations take a considerable time to carry through?—No; it was merely a question of multiplying and dividing, and I may say that in addition to checking one another's work, these officers could check the calculations with a slide rule, or by other mechanical means.

249. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) Did they do them with a slide rule or at length?—They did them at length and checked them by means of logarithmic tables. The slide rule is based upon the logarithmic tables; but here they checked direct. It would rest with the returning officer whether he employed mechanical means for checking this result or not.

250. (Sir Charles Eliot.) How many calculations were made in this test election?—In this case just under 30 calculations. A calculating machine could be used if desired, but it is hardly worth the expense. The matter rests wholly with the returning officer, but a slide rule would be of use in giving a mechanical check to the calculations to assure that they were accurate. At the conclusion of each transfer every candidate who obtained the quota or more than the quota of votes, was declared elected, and it became necessary in this case to declare Mr. Lloyd George elected, he having, with the aid of transfer votes, received more than the quota. The votes given to him in excess of the quota were transferred in the same way.

251. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) Here again you only transfer the votes which have been passed on to Mr. Lloyd George; you do not redistribute his own?—That is so, because we are in point of fact distributing Mr. Asquith's surplus, only in two stages.

252. But if you look at the last column of your result sheet you will see at the end there were only 28 votes between Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Henderson, and the whole election to the fifth seat turned on those 28 votes. It might happen that 28 votes would have been changed according as you redistributed the whole of the Lloyd George votes or only the transferred votes. It is conceivable that that might be the result?—I think that is conceivable; but I think the reason for carrying forward only a proportion of the votes transferred from Mr. Asquith still holds good. The voters in the first case support Mr. Asquith. More than sufficient have supported him to carry his election, and we are transferring the votes of Mr. Asquith's supporters and giving expression to their views. If Mr. Lloyd George had been elected upon the first count, no votes would have been transferred to him at all. The votes would have been carried forward to the next preference, and we are only giving effect to that same idea in two stages instead of one.

253. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) The man who has marked a second preference on any one of the votes on which Mr. Lloyd George was the first person voted for, wasted his time, because as far as I understand the second preferences were never used in that case, because they were never examined?—They were never examined. That may happen in any case.

254. That always must happen, if on the first count the person whose name appears first on the ballot paper does not get the quota?—No.

255. It always happens in such a case. It happened in nine instances in this case?—The supporters of Mr. Lloyd George obtained the full value of their one vote, but, in fact, by themselves they were not sufficiently strong to return a candidate. They could only return a candidate with the aid of other votes that were given originally to some other candidate. That process brings us towards the end of one stage. That completed the transfer of surplus votes, and then began the process of eliminating one by one the candidates who were at the bottom of the poll.

256. (Chairman.) In the event of no candidate receiving the quota in the first instance, would you begin then to eliminate?—Yes, eliminate the candidate at the bottom of the poll.

257. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) Is there not a risk, great or small, of eliminating by that means a man, who by means of transferred second preferences might possibly be elected?—Yes, I should say there is a risk;

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[Continued.]

but once more, a risk extremely small, and there is no practical way of carrying out the process of the elimination of candidates save of eliminating first the one who has received the lowest number of votes.

258. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Would you not say that there is an element of chance or accident in the expression of second or third choice? First of all, in the indication of his preferences, an elector might not care very much whom he put down second, third, or fourth. He would tend to be rather casual in his expression of third or fourth preferences. That would be one element of chance. Secondly, there is a chance whether the second or third choice is used or not. Is not that so? They are two quite separate questions, quite different from each other?—Yes. I think there must always be a small element of chance such as that to which you refer dependent upon the character of the electors. It must be so; even in an election of to-day there seems to be a certain proportion of careless or indifferent voters whose expression of opinion at the poll depends on very small incidents, and I presume that the same element of chance which enters into the decision of an elector to-day will enter under any scheme that we may propose I think that the second or third or fourth preferences will be given by the vast majority of electors, either in accordance with the directions of their party organisation, or in the case of those who are thoughtful, will be given as their real preferences. The system gives to each elector the perfect freedom, if he thinks about politics, to give expression to his real thoughts, and at the same time if he is a party man, pure and simple, to vote in accordance with the directions of the party organisation.

259. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) A man has a chance of voting for 12 candidates in this particular election?—Yes.

260. If he votes for any but three candidates, his second preferences are never used, and therefore would not you describe the chances as being strongly against his second preferences being used?—Undoubtedly so. I think in the actual elections which took place in Tasmania, the number of votes—that is to say of second preferences—used was extremely small indeed. The election turned practically wholly upon the first preferences, and, in the majority of cases, I think we shall have that experience of Tasmania repeated—the election will be determined by first preferences.

261. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) By the votes marked 1?—By the votes marked 1.

262. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) The second preference is used in the case of candidates who are at the bottom of the poll?—Yes.

263. It then does come into play?—Yes.

264. So it is not quite accurate to say that in nine cases it is wasted, because it certainly affects the election in the case of all the low-down candidates?—Yes. In fact this point once more raises the question which we debated towards the beginning, that the votes of a residuum less than the quota are not taken into account in determining the result of an election. Shall I proceed with the question of the elimination of candidates?

265. (*Chairman.*) Yes?—I will just give one example, because all the examples were identical. For this purpose quite simple transfer sheets were used, and I give here the figures in the case of Lord Hugh Cecil. You will observe as we proceed with the process of elimination that the number of exhausted votes continues to mount up pretty steadily. We have found, even in this model election, that the ordinary party voter did not proceed with marking his preferences beyond the candidates of his party; but that other electors who took perhaps a wider view of politics continued marking the paper in accordance with their preferences.

266. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) The first votes that you eliminated were Mr. Joynson Hicks's and Mr. Smith's?—Yes, we eliminated both together, because the totals of their votes taken together were less than the total of the votes of Mr. Shackleton, who was the next lowest upon the paper.

267. Not lower than Mr. Leif Jones?—Not on the first count. At this stage of the proceedings Mr. Leif Jones had 1,097 votes. Here we have Lord Hugh

Cecil's votes. Lord Hugh Cecil was eliminated after Mr. Joynson Hicks, Mr. Smith's and Mr. Shackleton's votes were transferred. The process was extremely simple, because there were no calculations required. There were 122 votes transferred to Mr. Burt, and 49 votes transferred to Mr. Henderson. After the elimination of Lord Hugh Cecil the votes of Mr. Leif Jones and of Mr. Walter Long were transferred in the same way, and at the conclusion of the proceedings this front row of boxes once more corresponded with the final result sheet. We should have completed the proceedings—and I think that is done in the model elections in Australia—by transferring Mr. Arthur Henderson's votes. We did not transfer them on this occasion. The result would have been to show five candidates, each of whom had been credited in all probability with a quota of votes, and so, finally, there would have been standing five candidates who had obtained the quota of votes, that is, the least number to ensure election. According to the rules proposed we do not proceed with the transfer of the votes of the final candidate to be eliminated, as the result is not affected by the transfer of his votes.

268. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) When you come to the distribution of the votes towards the end of the poll, I see you have three candidates who were quite close together, Mr. Burt, Mr. Henderson, and Mr. Macdonald, and Mr. Walter Long is not very far behind—there are not 700 votes between them. Surely there again chance plays some part, because it makes all the difference if you are distributed before the man who is just in front of you; if he is in front by a single vote you are struck out and distributed, and he is in the running still?—No; cases in which candidates will in an election be divided by a single vote will not occur, I think, more often than in an election under present conditions. We do have elections now in which the result turns upon a single vote, but they are very few.

269. My point is rather this, that you may have them quite close together, and the exact placing of them may depend upon the redistribution of votes, and according as you adopt the one system or the other the one or the other is in front. Take a concrete case: If you had distributed the whole of Mr. Lloyd George's votes—original as well as transferred—it might have been that Mr. Henderson was in front of Mr. Macdonald. If he had been, then Mr. Macdonald's votes would have been distributed, and he would have been dead and Mr. Henderson elected?—I think you can assume such a case.

270. Is it not very likely to happen in an election?—No, I do not think so.

271. I am not so sure?—I do not think it will happen.

272. Surely it might be that the choice of people who marked Mr. Lloyd George first was of a quite different character from those who marked Mr. Asquith first and Mr. Lloyd George second?—By indicating their second choice for Mr. Lloyd George, do they not show that you are once more dealing with people in line with the others.

273. I am not quite sure that you are. I think you have a class of opinion there, large or small, that is not obtaining its full share of representation?—Do you mean to say that the supporters of Mr. Lloyd George have not obtained their full share of representation?

274. No, they have not got their second choice, and it might be a quite different stream of opinion from the opinion that went to Mr. Asquith first, and then on to Mr. Lloyd George?—We will assume that it is so—that it is a different strain of opinion, those supporters of Mr. Lloyd George. Is not it then fairer that you should give full weight to the supporters of Mr. Asquith? It is Mr. Asquith who has around him the great band of 9,042 voters, and we are transferring his surplus, and it seems to me that we should, as we do under these rules, give full effect to the expression of the supporters of Mr. Asquith. We are, under these rules, giving full effect to the supporters of Mr. Lloyd George; they are less than the quota in themselves, and they only return Mr. Lloyd George with the assistance of voters who in the first place preferred Mr. Asquith. Therefore, I think it is fair that we should carry on the distribution

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of Mr. Asquith's votes in the sense that we are giving effect to the overwhelming support which has been accorded to him.

275. Yes, but as soon as you come to the third and fourth preferences you get very far away from the choice of Mr. Asquith, personally. It is very remote?—That may be so.

276. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) Is not the justification of it this, that every one of Mr. Lloyd George's supporters has had his vote counted and used effectively?—Yes.

277. Whereas a large number of Mr. Asquith's supporters have not, and if their second preferences were not used and not employed for somebody else, their votes would be wasted altogether. Is not that a justification for it?—I think so. I think we are giving full effect in this way to the supporters of Mr. Asquith, and it is his supporters we should take into account.

278. (Chairman.) Where the majority is very small, the preferences of those who voted for the last man will come in much more than those who voted for the top man; they are taken first?—Are you dealing with those candidates who are outside the running?

279. Yes?—That is so. That is to say, it is once more a case in which we cannot give effect to every vote. We cannot eliminate a candidate without transferring his votes, and it would be unfair to eliminate a candidate with a large number of votes before a

smaller one, because in eliminating a candidate you destroy at that moment his chance of election.

280. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) May I ask a general question? Lord Courtney has been telling us this morning that the order in which a party recorded its preferences did not matter, provided that they were not running more candidates than they could obtain sufficient votes to get a quota for. But in a case where they could not, have you ever formed an opinion or a theory as to which was more deserving of election in a constituency—a man who appeared, let us say, sixth on all the papers, or a man who appeared third on the majority of the papers and eleventh on the rest?—I can imagine an extreme case in which a candidate who is generally popular, as it were, might figure not on the first or second, but lower down in the preferences; but I think in the majority of cases if a man is generally popular, he will be found at the conclusion of the process of transfer of surplus votes in a favourable position.

281. (Sir Francis Hopwood.) Will you, if you can, give us the number of papers in which the power to vote was exercised, but not the power to give a preference?—Yes, I will try to ascertain that.

282. (Chairman.) I think we must ask you to attend again, as there are other questions the Commission wish to put to you?—Certainly, I am free now to attend at any time convenient to the Commission.

THIRD DAY.

Thursday, 22nd April 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (Chairman).

The Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D.,
D.C.L.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (Secretary).

Mr. JOHN H. HUMPHREYS recalled.

283. (Chairman.) The last question you were asked was with reference to the number of papers in which power to vote was exercised, but not the power to give a preference, and you said you would try and ascertain that. You have sent round a memorandum which only arrived this morning?—Yes. May I read it? In reply to the question No. 281, asked by Sir Francis Hopwood at the last meeting, I have examined the papers used at the last model election for the purpose of ascertaining the number of electors who had indicated a vote for some one candidate, but who expressed no further choice. The figures are as follows:—Asquith, 16; Balfour, 23; Burt, 2; Cecil, 11; Leif Jones, 4; Joynson Hicks, 1; Lloyd George, 6; Long, 5; Macdonald, 18; Shackleton, 2; total, 88. These figures show that only 4 per cent. of the electors refrained from expressing preferences. The papers of four candidates have been further examined in order to ascertain the number in which a second, but no third, choice was marked. The figures were as follows:—Burt, 2; Lloyd George, 43; Long, 31; Macdonald, 20—a total of 96. These figures show that in a total of 5,807 papers—those of the four candidates named—there were, in addition to 31 papers on which no preference had been marked, 96 other papers on which only one preference had been marked. In the model election only a very small percentage of the voters declined to exercise the right of preference. A much larger percentage, however, confined their preferences to candidates of the same party. The proportion of exhausted papers remained very low until the papers of Mr. Walter Long, the last of the Unionist candidates to be

eliminated, were distributed. It was found that out of the total of 2,035 papers with which Mr. Long was then credited, 1,497, or 74 per cent., had abstained from any preference for either of the three candidates still in the running; and as to the remaining 538 voters, the majority—370—indicated a preference for Mr. Burt, 81 for Mr. Henderson, and 87 for Mr. Macdonald. I examined a further parcel of ballot papers from which the small number of papers on which only one or two names had been marked had been already removed, and found that the preferences shown upon the remaining 6,090 papers were as follows:—Papers showing three preferences, 832; papers showing four preferences, 530; papers showing five preferences, 2,170 (therefore more than one-third of the number showed five preferences); papers showing six preferences, 528; papers showing seven preferences and over, 2,030. Exactly one-third of the papers showed seven preferences and over.

284. (Sir Francis Hopwood.) That is clearly what I wanted. I suppose you will agree that in a model election of this kind, the electors, so called, were more likely to exercise the preference than they would be in a real election?—I think that is so, and therefore I think it may be of value to add to this statement some figures taken from a Parliamentary Election in which the transferable vote was used in single member constituencies.

285. Where was this?—In the Biennial Elections for the Upper House of the Legislature of Western Australia in 1908. The figures for the metropolitan province were as follows:—Jenkins, 1,586; Allen, 766; Molloy, 733; Haynes, 691. Total, 3,776. When

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[Continued.]

Haynes, the candidate at the bottom of the poll, was eliminated, it was found that 417, or 60 per cent. of his votes, were transferable. After the transfer was completed the result was as follows:—Jenkins, 1,744; Molloy, 916; Allen, 842; exhausted 274. Total, 3,776. The 842 votes accredited to Allen were then distributed, and it was found that 549 votes, or 65 per cent., were transferable, the final result being as follows:—Jenkins, 2,132; Molloy, 1,077; exhausted, 567. Total, 3,776.

286. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) That was a single member constituency?—It was.

287. The only question was whether the voter marked his paper with a single mark or with two marks?—In this case there were four candidates for one seat, so he might have indicated three preferences with effect.

288. (*Lord Lochee.*) Your system does not apply to single member constituencies?—No, it does not.

289. Why not?—Because we cannot obtain the representation of all the elements within a constituency when there is only one seat being contested.

290. But there is a certain advantage from that point of view in its application to single member constituencies?—It does not give a fully representative character to the legislative body. The minorities in a single member constituency, whatever form of voting is used, have no opportunity of obtaining representation.

291. Supposing there were some administrative objection to multi-member constituencies, the application of your system would still be attended with great advantage?—I think it is preferable to the second ballot, but I do not go beyond that statement.

292. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) There is no reason why it should not be applied in the case of single member constituencies. If you wish to secure the representation of the majority rather than the representation of the minority, it is a reasonably good system to apply to single member constituencies?—If that is the only object in view.

293. (*Lord Lochee.*) You prefer a minimum of three members apart from the particular system because that gives larger scope for minority representation?—That is so.

294. In the election of two out of three, for instance, it would help you?—That is so.

295. It is not that three members are necessary to your transferable vote system at all?—We name three as a minimum.

296. Because that is the minimum that gives a chance to a minority?—That is so.

297. Not that it is a necessary incident to your particular system?—No. If constituencies have less than three members the minorities have no opportunity of securing representation.

298. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) There are two features in your system; one is the multiple member constituency, and the second is the single transferable vote. Do you attach equal importance to both of them?—Undoubtedly; or rather I would attach more importance to the multi-member constituency, because without multi-member constituencies the desired object cannot be obtained.

299. Constituencies with a number of votes less than the number of members is essential?—It would depend upon the system of election.

300. With electors restricted to a number of votes less than the number of members to be elected?—We recommend that there should be one vote only in these multi-member constituencies; but it is possible, under a proportional list system, for the elector to have as many votes as there are members to be elected, and yet by the different mechanism employed to secure for each part of the electorate its share of the representation.

301. What mechanism are you thinking of—the plural vote or the limited vote?—It is a mechanism which bases representation upon parties.

302. (*Chairman.*) That is the list system?—Yes.

303. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Taking these elections in the north country with which we have been familiar during the last few years, we have had the Liberal, the Conservative, and the Labour man, or the Liberal, the Conservative, the Labour man, and the Socialist—three

or four candidates for the one seat. You agree, as I understand, that your system of the single transferable vote would be good, *pro tanto*, in order to get rid of the difficulties and disadvantages which have arisen from the splitting of the vote between those four candidates?—For each single member constituency; but I have already had communications from many of the secretaries of the Labour organisations protesting against a system of representation which might leave them in every one of these northern constituencies at the bottom of the poll or eliminated in the process of transfer.

304. (*Chairman.*) The tendency would be to do away with the minority altogether. They would hardly ever have an opportunity of getting in?—Hardly ever. At every election they would be exposed to the very great risk of being eliminated in every constituency, and the party which desires representation is not content with the opportunity of presenting a candidate at the poll, but desires to be heard in the House of Commons.

305. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) But from the bare point of view of mechanism there is no objection?—From the point of view of mechanism there is no objection, but I would like to make reference to a statement made in the debates on the Second Ballot Bill in New Zealand. I think the Prime Minister in introducing the Bill quoted a statement from Mr. Kidston, the Prime Minister of Queensland, in which he referred to the number of electors who declined to indicate additional preferences, and expressed his opinion at the time that in order to make the system effective the indication of those preferences should be made compulsory. I think the experience of Queensland, although I have no figures on which to base my remarks, would seem to indicate what we found to be the case to some extent in the model election, that electors are willing to indicate preferences for members of their own party, but are not equally willing to indicate preferences for members of another party.

306. So that from that state of circumstances you deduce this result: that if the single transferable vote system were applied to single member constituencies the want of second choice might really reduce the whole system of election to a farce, inasmuch as the number of unused votes might even exceed the votes given to the candidate at the top of the poll?—Not, I think, to that extent, but it may happen that when the returning officer proceeded to eliminate the candidate lowest on the poll he would find that there was so small a proportion of preferences indicated that they did not affect materially the result of the election. But this is only in agreement with what I think is found in some of the second ballot elections in France, in which, at the second ballot, there is a considerable percentage of abstentions, and I think it is a reasonable thing, too. At the first election the electors have expressed their views, and I can quite understand that a large percentage of them would say to themselves: "I have not the candidate I desire, and I am indifferent to the fate of the other two candidates," and therefore in the case of the second ballot such electors do not proceed to the poll, and in the case of Queensland such electors do not indicate a second preference. But the matter is different when there are several candidates of the same party standing in a true proportional system.

307. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You spoke of representations made to you by Labour members. So far as you know is there a demand for the single transferable vote from the Labour members?—Undoubtedly.

308. What evidence have you of it?—I would like to prepare that evidence if I may. I have letters from secretaries, and I think Mr. G. H. Roberts, Senior Whip to the Labour Party, would be prepared to speak as a member of the party.

309. If that is so we should like to hear that evidence from him?—I will mention that to Mr. Roberts. I can certainly say that very many of the associations do not care for systems which will threaten even temporarily to deprive the party of representation.

310. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Can you give any particulars of the use of the transferable vote by the Northumberland miners which you mention in your memorandum. How did they come to use it?—It

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[Continued.]

arose from the agitation in favour of proportional representation prior to the last Redistribution Bill. The present Governor-General of Canada, Earl Grey, then Mr. Albert Grey (a member of the House of Commons) organised a model election in Northumberland among the miners upon somewhat similar lines to the elections recently organised in London, and the Northumberland Miners' Organisation, struck with the fairness of the system, applied the system in a somewhat limited form to the election of their own agents. The election of agents is effected by the votes of branches. Branches are permitted to nominate candidates, and the general secretary prepares a ballot paper of the candidates nominated. This is sent out to the branches, and these branches, as branches, indicate their preferences for the candidates nominated by marking the papers with the figures one, two, three, four and so on. No difficulty has been experienced by these miners in carrying out such an election.

311. (*Chairman.*) It is not a general vote?—It is not a general vote.

312. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It is the branch that votes?—It is the branch that votes. The system was based upon the model election carried out by the present Earl Grey.

313. It was introduced to Northumberland by Mr. Albert Grey, as he then was, who had advocated the system in Parliament in 1884?—Yes.

314. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Does it involve the proportional distribution of votes?—No, it does not, because as a rule there is only one agent to be elected at a time. An agent is a responsible official of the society who holds his position for a long time.

315. (*Lord Lochee.*) Corresponding to a single member constituency?—It does in point of fact.

316. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Has each branch the same number of votes as there are candidates?—No.

317. How does it work then?—I presume each branch has as many ballot papers as the branch has votes.

318. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Is the system of single transferable vote used as you mention in the first and second pages of your memorandum by such organisations as the Chief Labour Organisation of Canada, the Toronto District Labour Council, the Winnipeg District Trades Council, and so on?—Yes, in all cases; and I would say that so confident are these organisations of the superiority of this method of election that they trust to the old chance method of carrying forward surplus votes.

319. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) But do these organisations elect single agents?—No, they elect several members. The Metropolitan Counties Branch of the British Medical Association has adopted the rules of the Municipal Representation Bill in their entirety.

320. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) The third, fourth, and fifth preferences in the model election that you have held are extremely important things, because I see as a matter of fact from your result sheet it was the third or fourth preferences on Mr. Long's paper that secured the return of Mr. Burt?—Yes.

321. Before that he was behind, and that pulled him up and put him in front of Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Henderson?—Yes.

322. Supposing that you have a seven member constituency, how far can the ordinary elector express a sixth or seventh preference? What value has it in your opinion?—I do not think that the majority of electors will proceed beyond their party candidates. Additional preferences such as those expressed at the model election will probably be indicated by the more educated types of electors. I think the preferences shown in the transfer of Mr. Walter Long's papers are reasonable. We find that of those that did express these further preferences the majority gave them to Mr. Burt, and I think that that is what we would have expected.

323. I would have expected the opposite. I think the second or third preferences would have been exercised in a way to embarrass the Government, and so would have gone to the Labour candidate?—No, I do not think that electors would, in indicating these preferences, necessarily think that it was their duty to

embarrass the Government if they desired true representation for themselves.

324. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Was not that the reason why "panachage," or cross voting, was prohibited in Belgium, because some such use as that was made of the power?—The fear of some such use, but personally I do not think "panachage" has had the result alleged. I cannot find a great deal of evidence showing that "panachage" has been successfully carried out.

325. At any rate the fear of the misuse of "panachage" was sufficient to bring about this prohibition in Belgium?—In order to keep the two parties quite distinct. I do not think there will be that same fear of "panachage" in this system. In order to obtain in the first instance the full result of a vote, the vote must be given to the candidate of one's choice. Now "panachage" is possible only with a very accurate knowledge of the electoral conditions. In carrying out that process electors run a risk of depriving their own party of a seat, and of giving an additional seat to their opponents, because the votes given by way of "panachage" to other lists count towards the sum total of votes counted for those lists. "Panachage" was only of value when the supporters of a list knew that they had a number of votes to spare and could safely give those votes to the least competent members of another list. With the transferable vote the vote would in the first instance be given for the party candidates, and it may be assumed that there would be some electors who would indicate preferences in order to spite the Government. Those preferences might possibly decide the result as between the two last candidates; but it would be so in only very rare instances. The votes in the first instance would be needed and would be used in the return of the party candidates, and so each party would obtain a representative for every quota of votes it could rally to the polls, and it would be only the final seat in which any element of cross voting would affect the result.

326. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) I quite agree, but still when you have levelled down from the top and up from the bottom, I should have thought in most cases you would have got nearly an equality of votes, and the candidates for the last seat would be very near together, and in most cases that would have been turned by the fifth and sixth preferences of other voting papers. I do not agree with you in saying that it is a rare thing. I think it would be a common thing in all elections, would it not?—I have not quite followed that.

327. As soon as you come down to the last seat, and as soon as you have excluded all those who have got their quota, and then distributed all those from the bottom upwards as far as two or three men, are not the chances then that those two or three men are very close together? They certainly were in your election very close together?—We will assume that there are five candidates to be elected (as in that case), that four quotas have been duly used in the return of party candidates, and there remain then very nearly two quotas of votes. We will assume that at that stage a Conservative has 2,000 votes, a Liberal candidate 1,500 votes, and a Labour candidate 1,000 votes, or one may imagine the voting more nearly equal. Then the election to the final seat would be decided in the same way as if the system were applied to single member constituencies.

328. I am not quite sure I agree, because it seems to me that you are settling that seat by what are the fourth or fifth choices of a large number of voters, and I want your opinion as to how far you can compare the value of a first choice with the fifth choice of an ordinary elector?—I can compare it with the conditions of a single member constituency. If this system were applied to a single member constituency, there would probably be a Liberal, a Labour, and a Conservative candidate. The first choice would be given quite reasonably to the party candidate; the second choice would have to be between the candidates of the two other parties. Now, apply that to a five-membered constituency with four Conservative candidates, four Liberal candidates, and four Labour candidates. The first four preferences would, in a normal way, I think, be applied to the party candidates—there would be variations on the part of some

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[Continued.]

electors—but the fifth preference would in that case correspond to the second preference in a single member constituency, in which there were three candidates of different types. That is my opinion. Therefore, the fifth preference indicated on Mr. Long's papers—or, as there were five Conservatives in this election, the sixth preference indicated on Mr. Long's paper—would correspond to the second preference in a single member constituency in which a Conservative voter had to decide between the claims of a Liberal and a Labour candidate.

329. Still, do not you think that with the ordinary elector a certain element of chance is introduced. He will vote the party ticket for his own candidates, and after that he has almost exhausted his power of choice?—I do not underrate the capacity of the elector.

330. No, and I do not either?—In all the elections in which I have been engaged I have certainly found them able to indicate preferences, and I think representatives of labour parties are perfectly willing to testify to the capacity of their own supporters to indicate preferences. As I say, the evidence does show that a very large percentage of the electors will not proceed beyond the preference for their party candidates. In the single member constituencies in Western Australia, in the figures I have just quoted, we find that only 65 per cent. indicated a preference. I am not aware of the local conditions, but that shows a considerable falling off in the marking of preferences after the first.

331. I suppose the larger the constituency the less the inclination to mark all the preferences beyond the party list?—I think so, and therefore the preferences that are expressed will be real preferences. I can only speak from my personal experience. One-third of the voters in the model election indicated seven or more preferences.

332. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Would your Society be prepared to organise and carry through a model election showing the application of your system to a single member constituency, and to a three member constituency, if the Commission so desired?—I would like to submit that point to my Committee. I do not think it is a matter on which I can reply without consultation.

333. I think it would be very interesting to see a model election for a single member constituency with a certain number of candidates, and for a three member constituency. That would be two elections?—Yes.

334. (*Lord Lochee.*) Which would you prefer for a model election—three or five?—I think five, or even seven.

335. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) You would like five best, no doubt. I should have a preference for three, because it involves a less measure of re-distribution?—That would be so.

336. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) In how many places is your system actually in force for Parliamentary elections at present?—Only in one—in Tasmania.

337. We have no evidence of its operations except in Tasmania?—No, not for Parliamentary elections.

338. On the continent the "list" is, as a rule, the system adopted?—Yes.

339. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Do you know what is the percentage of votes spoiled in ordinary elections under the present system. In Tasmania it seems to be about 3 per cent?—On that point I notice that the town clerk of Liverpool stated in evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords that 5 per cent. of the voters spoiled their papers.

340. (*Lord Lochee.*) In Parliamentary elections?—He stated in general terms that he found about five per 1,000 papers.

341. Was he speaking of the Liverpool district only?—He was speaking of his district. I think there is a false impression as to the number of spoiled papers in all elections. One hundred electors come in and mark their papers, and go away and create no impression, but the trouble which an incompetent elector gives creates an abiding impression on the mind of the presiding officer, and of those who are around him. I think that impression gives rise to a false idea of the total

number of spoiled papers. All the figures of elections show that the number is very small.

342. (*Chairman.*) Is a record kept anywhere of spoiled papers?—I have not seen a complete record, but at each election there must be a statement furnished of the number of spoiled papers.

343. (*Lord Lochee.*) You do not know whether the number is diminishing from practice?—It is very small. I have no knowledge of figures in past years.

344. (*Chairman.*) We will come now to your memorandum giving a comparison of list methods?—I was going to complete my evidence on page 15 of the previous memorandum, as to the practicability of the single transferable vote from the general point of view, and not from a detailed point of view.

345. We have dealt with the question of spoiled papers?—Yes, in ordinary elections. Elections under the system of transferable votes are dealt with by the Returning Officer of Tasmania in his report to the Senate of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901. It is there shown that 18,822 voters recorded their votes in the elections for the Commonwealth Senate, and of these, 419 were declared invalid. Of these, only 271 were due to the new method of voting. The percentage of spoiled papers due to the Hare system was 1.44, but the returning officer adds that "this would have been much less had it not been that the old defective system previously in force in Tasmania required the actual scoring out of every rejected candidate instead of, as in most countries, the marking of a cross or sign only against those candidates who were selected. Had this better form of marking been in practice in Tasmania previous to the introduction of the Hare system of voting it is probable that there would be very few invalid papers due to the Hare system of marking with preference numbers." I would like to add to that point that in Tasmania the marking of three preferences is compulsory, and a ballot paper is spoiled on which three preferences are not marked. If the provision that is made in the Municipal Representation Bill had also been in force I think there would have been even a smaller percentage of spoiled papers. It may interest the Commission to see a Finnish ballot paper. I submit it as evidence of the capacity of the ordinary elector. This (*producing a ballot paper*) is a ballot paper used in Finland. In the election in which that ballot paper was used there were 0.59 per cent. of spoiled votes—just $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The elector could vote for any one of those lists and at the same time make up a list of his own if he desired. Further, at the same time, universal suffrage—men and women adult suffrage—was introduced at the same election, and yet when the election was carried out it was found that only $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the votes were spoiled.

346. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) How long did the counting of votes take at this Finland election?—A fortnight. I produced the paper as evidence that we need not fear in our own simple system the capacity of the voter to mark his ballot paper.

347. (*Lord Lochee.*) What do you reckon to be the time of counting under your system?—I will come to that point next.

348. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Is the Finnish system a list system?—Yes, a very complicated list system.

349. (*Lord Lochee.*) What district was that in—Helsingfors?—Yes.

350. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Is this a voting paper for a single constituency or the whole country?—For a single constituency in which there were 22 members to be elected.

351. (*Lord Lochee.*) That is out of about 90,000 people in Helsingfors?—Yes, but I do not know whether more than Helsingfors was included in the electoral division. I can ascertain that fact.

352. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) That was the paper that had to be filled up by the individual voter?—Yes, it had to be marked. He had an opportunity also of making a list of his own.

353. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) It gives the names?—Yes, and if desired the elector could introduce three names.

354. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Do these columns represent the different lists of the different parties?—Yes.

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355. With particulars about each candidate?—Yes, the particulars of the candidates are on each list. There are only three names in each list. I submit it, not to recommend the system, but to show the capacity of electors.

356. (*Lord Loches.*) That piece of paper has actually passed through the mill; it is an actual document?—Yes. In Würtemberg, in which a list system has been introduced, the experience as to capacity of electors is the same; and in Belgium no one talks about impracticability.

357. (*Chairman.*) The next item is the "time and staff required." Do you anticipate much increase of staff?—On the question of staff I should like to make some reference to the school board elections which took place in Glasgow on Friday, the 2nd instant. Arrangements were made for verifying the contents of the ballot boxes at the end of the day. The enumeration of the votes commenced at 9 o'clock the following day with a staff of 300 clerks.

358. (*Lord Loches.*) Have they the cumulative system there still?—Yes, the election was under the direction of the Treasurer of the Board. The number of voters on the list was 150,000 in round numbers, only 40,778 voters took part in the election—not quite double the number of those who took part in our model election. The result was ascertained in just over five hours, but for the purpose of enumeration a staff of 300 clerks was employed.

359. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) How many clerks had you at your model election?—Forty-five. Copies of the sheets used by the returning officer in Glasgow have been sent to me. The particulars of each bundle of 50 papers were abstracted upon a sheet of this kind (*producing a paper*). Therefore 800 sheets were used for abstracting the particulars of the 40,000 papers. The votes were abstracted, tabulated, and checked, and the additions checked by different clerks. The particulars of the 800 sheets were entered upon 80 other sheets, and the particulars of those sheets were entered upon eight further sheets, and from the eight further sheets the final totals were obtained. I think that election will give some idea of the capacity of English returning officers to deal with any task that is submitted to them in the enumeration of votes.

360. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The inference you draw is that the staff required will not be larger than the staff at present required for elections to the school board under the Scotch system?—The inference I make is that we should want a smaller staff—considerably smaller.

361. (*Chairman.*) If constituencies were amalgamated the actual number employed in the conduct of an election would be less than under the present system?—That is my opinion. In a parliamentary election the number of votes cast in a town like Birmingham would be about 70,000. If the contents of the ballot boxes were verified on the previous evening it would, in my judgment, be possible to count those votes in the course of a full day. The first count would be completed quite early, and that first count would give a very fair indication as to the way in which the election would go.

362. Your society has never gone into the question as to whether there are any appliances for checking votes?—In the arrangements for the election itself we arrange that each part of the counting and sorting should be checked.

363. But not automatically by self recording machines. Your society has never gone into that question?—Of mechanical voting, no; because so far as we have been able to ascertain all the machines devised relate to elections of the present kind. There have been no machines made that I know of which indicate preferences. I think there would be no increase in the cost of organising elections. Birmingham, with a system of single member constituencies, requires a separate staff for the conduct of an election in each electoral division. With the new system one staff only would be required, although this staff would be larger than any of the staffs required for separate divisions.

364. The expense would be considerably increased—the printing, and all these lists being drawn up?—I do not think so, because there would only be one set of forms instead of seven sets of forms at the present time. For each election there is a separate series of forms required.

365. Your next item is dealing with frivolous candidatures. What is your suggestion to prevent that?—I make no suggestion, because I understand that Lord Courtney thinks that the number of frivolous candidatures will not be very large. But I do direct attention to the provisions made in Tasmania and also in Belgium for the prevention of frivolous candidatures. In Tasmania the sum deposited on nomination is not returned where the candidate at the time of his exclusion from the poll has obtained less than one fifth of the quota, or, where only one member is to be returned, the number of votes obtained is less than one-fifth part of the votes received by the successful candidate. In Belgium each list, even if it consists of but one candidate, must be presented by at least 100 qualified citizens. I think this provision in the Belgian law is a reasonable provision—that a Parliamentary candidate should be nominated by 100 qualified electors.

366. Now we will turn to your comparison of the lists.* Speaking generally you consider the Belgian system the most practical and most easily worked system?—I think it is the most practicable and most easily worked of the list systems.

367. Your general conclusion is that although it can be worked with comparative ease, yet it does not fulfil the desired object so well as the single transferable vote?—That is my general conclusion.

368. I think it will be hardly necessary to go into other list systems, but will you take the Belgian one, and give us a brief account of that. You actually were present at an election in Belgium?—Yes, in the elections at Ghent.

369. In that case there were six lists?—Six lists, and for one of the lists there was only one candidate nominated.

370. Was this the first time this system had been in force?—No, that was the fifth election in which it had been used.

371. So the electors were more or less familiar with the system?—Yes, quite familiar. There was no difficulty whatever.

372. Do you know at all what number of papers were spoiled in that election?—I can give a slight indication. I was present at the counting of 1,370 votes. They were the votes recorded in three polling districts. There were 26 spoiled papers, but of these 13 were blank, indicating that the voters, although attending at the poll, did not wish to record any opinion.

373. Attendance is compulsory?—Yes, each elector must attend at the poll. The 13 other papers showed in nearly every case some confusion in the mind of the elector with the elections for the Communal Councils in which the elector can give several votes or preferences. There are two list systems in use in Belgium; one for the election to Communal Councils, and the other for parliamentary elections. The presence of the two systems necessarily, I think, leads to some confusion in the minds of the electors.

374. Do you know why they have two different systems?—The parliamentary system was adopted last, and the change in method was due to the desire of certain parties that each elector should be restricted to voting for members of one list only. There had been a fear with the earlier system, that electors who knew that their party could spare a certain number of votes without losing a seat, would indicate their votes for the least competent members of another party—the operation which is known as "panachage."

375. In your opinion does this list system give tremendous power to the party organisation?—Much less than I thought before I went to Belgium. I found in point of fact that the party organisations under the proportional system were anxious to do justice to the

* See memorandum, page 33.

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different sections of opinion within the party, and that there was no attempt to exclude, as it were, one section from representation, because on some of the political questions of the day, or on one of the political questions of the day, it did not see eye to eye with the remaining members of the party.

376. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You remember a remark in Sir Arthur Hardinge's Report where he said, "The Belgian system is in practice fatal to the representation of small minorities or to the presence in the Chambers of independent members." Should you or should you not agree with that remark?—I should not accept it in its entirety, but I think Count Goblet D'Alviella will be able to give evidence upon that part of the Report. When I conversed with some of the politicians in Belgium I ascertained that in the arrangement of the lists due expression was given to the constituent parts of the party, even—in the formation of the liberal lists—by formal election by the members of the association, and that formal election determined the order in which the candidates' names appeared upon the ballot paper. So that it would seem to me that it would be possible for an independent candidate who had the support of a reasonable section of the party to ensure that his name appeared upon the party's list.

377. Provided the appearance of his name did not endanger the list as a whole?—Quite so.

378. (*Lord Lochee.*) But I understand the selection of party candidates was itself the result of a previous voluntary informal election?—By an election.

379. Like the American primaries and secondaries, and so on?—It is similar to that, but with much more freedom. I would like to say that since 1900, when the system was introduced, the order in which candidates' names appear upon the party list has been altered by the result of the voting only four times, which shows that the vast majority of the electors do vote in accordance with the recommendations of the party committees.

380. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) They vote as they are told?—Yes.

381. (*Lord Lochee.*) There is no indication of party given in the official list in the Belgian system?—No, each list receives an official number.

382. In the Finnish election I gather from this Finnish paper that the party character of the list is indicated on the list itself?—That is the voting paper used in a Finnish election.

383. The Finnish list indicates the party character of the candidates.—Yes.

384. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The Belgian list does not?—The Belgian list does not indicate it.

385. (*Lord Lochee.*) This Finnish paper corresponds to this Belgian paper, and is used for the same purpose?—Yes.

386. In the Finnish paper the indication is quite open. "Social Democratic," or "Swedish," and so on?—Yes.

387. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You say in your memorandum that the tendency in Belgium is to make the lists as inclusive as possible?—Yes.

388. And you illustrate that by saying that the Catholic list included both a Free Trader and a Protectionist?—Yes.

389. You also say that the question of Free Trade or Protection does not at the present time occupy a prominent place in Belgian politics. Is not that the explanation?—No, not altogether, because I also refer to a question which was very prominent in Belgium, that is to say the annexation of the Congo.

390. That was not a party question?—No, it did not become a party question, but it might very easily have become a party question. The question was raised at a meeting of the Liberal Associations, in which each member was allowed to vote exactly as he preferred.

391. But supposing the question of Free Trade or Protection had been the dominant question, would your lists have been as inclusive in that respect as they were?—I believe so. I think a question of that sort, which did not strike fundamentally at the root of the principles on which, say, the Socialist party was based, would not have involved the question of exclusion from the party.

392. Then it would not have been the dominant question. If it had been the dominant question—the principle question before the electors—surely the lists would not have been inclusive in that respect?—I think so; but if opinion had been very strong, and strong to such a degree that the party broke into two, then it would still be possible for each of those two sections to obtain representation.

393. That is another question, but they would have been included in separate lists?—Yes, in the case of a division. Now, there is a division in the Liberal party in Brussels between the more radical element and the more moderate element. These two at present place candidates on one list, but it is quite possible that in some circumstances those two divisions of the party would nominate separate lists.

394. Just as it is possible in England that the right or left wing of a party might agree upon the same candidate, or might not be able to agree?—Yes.

395. (*Chairman.*) A candidate cannot appear in more than one list?—He cannot.

396. Is that universal in all list systems?—I do not think it applies to every Swiss system.

397. Is it quite conceivable that there might be two sections who might desire to have the same man?—Yes. Certainly in Finland every facility is given for candidates to appear upon different lists. In Sweden, too.

398. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) It is common in Belgium to have a list consisting of only one name, like No. 6 here?—Very seldom.

399. Do they get elected?—No. In this particular case, although the candidate was nominated, it was not a real candidature. Before the time of the election he lost his mental balance and was taken to a madhouse; and his friends informed him that he was being taken to the Houses of Parliament, and others said, "Well, he will know no difference." Still, although the candidature was not a real candidature, there were some 276 voters who recorded their votes for this list.

400. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Do more than one party often combine and issue a joint list?—They did so on several occasions at the recent election and a previous election, but the opinion has been expressed both by liberals and socialists that these common arrangements have proved a failure. They are based upon the assumption that if the liberal organisation and the socialist organisation present together a common list, all the liberal electors and all the socialist electors will support that list. It is found by experience that there are a certain number of liberals who would vote for a liberal list, but would not vote for a liberal-socialist list, and similarly a number of socialists of the extreme kind who would not support a common list. Therefore, in the opinion both of socialists and liberals, these "cartel" arrangements have proved a failure.

401. Does not that show that the party has to be rather careful as to whom they include in the list, and that they cannot afford in their list to represent any minority of opinion unless it is a strong minority in the party?—In the formation of a list I think the organisers must take cognisance of the strength of feeling of the different sections and arrange the list accordingly, and in that sense they must be careful not to include a name which is certainly not desired by any section of the party.

402. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Then there is no proportional representation in this at all—no representation of minorities. The lists must be made up of the buffs or the blues, pure and unadulterated?—I do not quite follow. The party list must bear the designation of the party. The members nominated on that list must all be members of the party, but there may be a variation in shade among the candidates placed upon that list.

403. I understood in answer to a previous question, you put it the other way just now, namely, that the people who appeared upon the list must be what I call all true blue, that is, they must be right up to concert pitch, you must not have lukewarm people attached to the end of the list for fear of weakening the strength of the whole party?—What I desired to say was that if in a given constituency a certain section of the party

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consisted of lukewarm supporters and that section was large enough to amount to the electoral quotient, then it would be politic for the party to nominate a "lukewarm" candidate. But if that lukewarm candidate only represented a very small fraction of the party, then it would not be profitable for the party to nominate him.

404. All the members on the list need not in fact be orthodox. You may introduce into the list two or three moderately unorthodox candidates and so secure, if the whole list is elected, the election of a certain number of persons of, perhaps, less rigid mind than the majority?—If that reflects the feeling of considerable sections of the party. There was a case, I think, of one list in which a candidate was placed right at the bottom—M. Colfs of Brussels—but the voting showed that he had sufficient supporters to bring him up above other members of the list. That is unusual. But I imagine that in the preparation of any subsequent list M. Colfs obtained his proper position, and the party organisation recognised the fact that he did have the support of a sufficiently large section of the party.

405. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) I see that in your memorandum in which you give an account of the election in Belgium, the party ticket was adopted almost entirely?—Yes.

406. There were very few indications of preference inside the party lists?—No.

407. Only about 2,000—1,900 and 1,500?—In both cases they were for special candidates.

408. Who had been specially advertised?—Who had been specially advertised.

409. That shows, I suppose, that in most cases the elector will vote according to his party list. He will take his party list and swallow it whole?—I think so.

410. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) How do you explain the Continental preference for the list system?—It would appear that the list system of proportional representation was adopted in Switzerland, the first country in which the system was adopted, because that system was more easily grafted upon previous electoral conditions.

411. Would that apply to Europe?—I think so.

412. You suggest, I think, something to the effect that party machinery has taken a stronger hold on Europe than it has on England?—I think so.

413. That is your opinion?—Yes.

414. You really think party organisation is stronger on the Continent of Europe than it is in England?—I would not like to speak of the whole of Europe. I do not think I am qualified to do so.

415. Do you think it is stronger in Belgium?—Yes, and also in Switzerland. I think that writers, or at all events some writers now speak as if it was impossible to conceive of an elector voting except as a member of a party—that his privilege as an elector has been merged into his privilege, as it were, of being a member of a party.

416. Might not another explanation be that the list system is easier for the voter to understand and to work?—I, personally, do not think it is easier to understand.

417. Take the Belgian system; nothing can be simpler than the task offered to the voter. He merely has to make a dot here or there?—Yes; but although that is so there is some dissatisfaction, even in Belgium, with the law as it stands.

418. That may be, but the fact remains that the task is a very simple task?—It is a very simple task, but one must always remember that no other country has ventured to recommend that same system. In the report of the French Commission du Suffrage Universel severe condemnation was passed upon the suggestion that electors should be confined to giving their votes to one list. The provision for facilitating the work of the elector by allowing the voter to express his approval of the arrangement of candidates by party committees, by marking the list at the top, as in the Belgian system, was not even considered.

419. But I was comparing systems actually in force, and not systems proposed. I suppose you would grant to the Belgian system the merit of being the simplest?—The simplest of the list systems.

420. The simplest of any system, actually in work, for the voter?—Not for the voter, because the instructions under the single transferable vote are direct: "Place the figure 1 against the candidate of your first choice; place the figure 2 against the candidate of your second choice," and so on. Those instructions are direct. Now in the Belgian instructions, although they are simple, four ways of marking the vote have to be indicated.

421. Yes; but practically the choice is between two, and in most cases the first is adopted?—The choice is between two.

422. The third and fourth are merely supplementary votes?—They are variations of the second; but still the instructions for the elector have to contain the precise details of the way in which the vote can be given, and those details also appear in the press. Therefore, I think from the point of view of the voter, the system of voting is under the single transferable vote as simple as, if not simpler, than in the Belgian system, which is the most simple of list systems.

423. All the Belgian voter has to consider is whether he has to put his pencil here or there?—Yes.

424. Nothing can be simpler than that?—Can anything be simpler than putting the figure 1 against the name of the candidate.

425. Followed by 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6?—If he wishes.

426. (Sir Francis Hopwood.) Will you describe a little more fully what are in fact the instructions given to the Belgian voter. Is it your point that the necessary instructions impose a difficulty upon the minds of the Belgian voters?—The necessary official instructions to the elector would be more complicated in the Belgian list system than the necessary official instructions to the voter under the system of the single transferable vote.

427. Can we get the instructions to the Belgian voter on our notes. Can you tell us what they are?—Yes; I have not the official wording, but I have a description here. In Belgium, although each constituency returns several members, each elector has but one choice for each vote to which he is entitled, a choice which may be recorded in four different ways. In each case the act of voting consists in pencilling the white spot contained in one or other of the black squares at the head of the list, or against the names of individual candidates. In the first place, the elector may vote by blackening the spot at the head of the list. The significance of such a vote is that the elector votes for the list, and at the same time approves of the order in which the candidates have been arranged by the party organisation. That is the first method. Secondly, the elector may vote by blackening the white spot against the name of one of the effective candidates on one of the lists.

428. (Lord Loches.) And not blackening the top?—No; if so the paper is spoilt.

429. (Sir Francis Hopwood.) Then that is an alternative?—That is an alternative. Such a vote implies that the elector votes for the list on which the candidate's name appears, but that instead of approving of the order in which the candidates have been arranged, he prefers the particular candidate he has marked. The third and fourth methods are variations of the second. In the third, the elector can record an individual preference for one of the supplementary candidates. The fourth method is, that he may record a preference for one of the effective candidates, and also a preference for one of the supplementary candidates.

430. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) So, if you have no supplementary candidates, alternatives 3 and 4 disappear?—Yes, but if the elector blackens the white spot at the head of the list, and in addition gives a vote of preference to some particular candidate, the paper is spoilt.

431. (Chairman.) As regards supplementary candidates, I suppose those for the effective list who were not successful in the first instance come before the supplementary candidates?—No.

432. They are eliminated altogether?—Those not elected as effective candidates disappear. You will notice in some of the lists that the last of the

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candidates nominated as an effective candidate is nominated as the first of the supplementary candidates.

433. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) The four last candidates appear as supplementary candidates in List 2?—Yes. So that in practice the highest candidate who is not elected as an effective candidate becomes elected as a supplementary candidate.

434. (*Chairman.*) Does the system of ascertaining the actual order in which the candidates stand work well in practice?—It involves the formation of different heaps of votes, corresponding to votes for the party list as such, and votes of preference for individual candidates. At each counting district an abstract of the votes has to be made out in a schedule of *this* kind (*producing a paper*), in which the number of votes for the list is indicated and the number of votes of preference for each individual candidate is also indicated. There were at Ghent six lists, and therefore the totals for six lists had to be furnished. There were in all 30 candidates, and therefore 30 further totals had to be furnished, the number of preference votes for each one of those 30 candidates. *Here* is the paper used in preparing the official return for each district (*producing a paper*). These particulars would be ascertained for 120 different districts by 120 sets of returning officers, or rather subsidiary returning officers. The returns would be sent by post to the returning officer.

435. (*Lord Lochee.*) Districts of a constituency, do you mean, or electoral districts?—The whole of the constituency was divided into electoral districts.

436. Each constituency?—I am speaking of the particular constituency—that of Ghent—at the election for which I was present. This constituency was divided into 360 polling districts, which were linked together so as to form 120 counting districts. In the latter the particulars of the votes for the lists and the preference votes for individual candidates were ascertained. Those particulars were entered upon sheets (*producing specimen*); the sheets were forwarded by post to the central office, and the particulars of the 120 sheets were entered upon further sheets—one for each party. *Here* are sheets for Party 2, Party 5, and Party 3. By that means the particulars for different cantons, such as Ghent, were ascertained, and then a further set of sheets was used in order to ascertain the final totals (*producing further papers*); so that the work involved in ascertaining the full details of the election was very considerable.

437. Is this list in the corner a list of districts?—Yes.

438. Thirteen?—Yes, but for one of those districts—the canton of Ghent—there were 40 sub-districts.

439. Forty wards?—Yes, 40 wards. The particulars for each ward were ascertained first, and then the more complete totals were ascertained from the abstracts furnished by the wards.

440. (*Chairman.*) In this particular election which you attended, how long did it take before all this was ascertained?—The preliminary particulars for each of the 120 counting districts were ascertained on the Sunday afternoon.

441. The same day as the election?—Yes. The counting commenced at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and the results were known by 7 o'clock in the evening—not the final abstract. These results were given to the press at 7 o'clock.

442. (*Lord Lochee.*) When did the voting begin?—At 8 o'clock in the morning.

443. And finish?—At 1 o'clock.

444. Then there was an hour's interval for collecting the papers?—Yes, from three districts only.

445. The actual enumeration of votes began at 2 o'clock?—Yes.

446. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) In your notes on page 11, I see 3 o'clock mentioned. Does that refer to a different election? You say "The counting commenced soon after 3 o'clock and was completed, both for the Senate and Chamber, by 7 p.m." Does that refer to the same election?—Yes, the notes are correct.

447. They began the counting a little after 3 o'clock and went on till about 7 o'clock?—Yes.

448. (*Lord Lochee.*) They commenced two hours after the voting finished?—Yes.

449. And at 7 o'clock an official announcement was made of the actual result?—No. No official announcement was made, but the particulars in different counting districts were handed to the press unofficially. A rough cast was made of those particulars in the offices of the journals, so as to publish the results a little earlier than the officials could do so. These preliminary sheets, 120 of them, were sent by post to the central offices. The abstracting of the particulars on these sheets commenced at 9 o'clock in the morning of the next day.

450. The real result having previously been published by some newspaper?—An approximate result.

451. Yes, a guess?—A good guess. The abstracting of the returns commenced at 9 o'clock in the morning and was not completed until midnight. In that case there was a double election, for the Senate as well as the Chamber of Representatives.

452. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) I think you say that the Belgian method is slightly easier than the one of which you gave us a demonstration, so far as the counting of votes goes?—I think so, slightly; but there is very little to choose between them. I would like to point out that a very large staff was used in the counting of those votes at Ghent. At each of the 120 counting places there were several persons engaged.

453. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) That was independently of those engaged at the central place on the following day?—Yes. There were three officials and three party witnesses, all of whom took part in the actual counting of the votes.

454. (*Lord Lochee.*) What was the population of the constituency represented by this election?—I have not the figures of the population.

455. It was Ghent and several neighbouring districts—Ghent and its suburbs?—Yes. There were several rural constituencies attached to Ghent.

456. We could easily find that out?—I could easily ascertain. The votes counted on that occasion were 270,000, that being the poll for the district.

457. (*Chairman.*) Were there many abstentions notwithstanding the law of compulsion?—Very few. As I explained, compulsion involves attending at the polling place but not necessarily the recording of a vote.

458. As to the actual order in which candidates eventually come out, I notice the officials take the first one on the list, and if he has not a sufficient number they give him a sufficient number to make it up?—That is so. As explained in the example given, if List 1 consists of three candidates, A., B., and C., arranged in the order named, and the 8,000 supporters of the list have given their votes as follows:—votes at the head of the list, 4,000; preferential votes for A., 500; preferential votes for B., 500; preferential votes for C., 3,000. Total, 8,000. Candidate A. being the first in order on the list has the first claim on the votes recorded for the list. The "electoral quotient" is 3,750, and A.'s total, 500, is raised to this number by the addition of 3,250 votes taken from those recorded for the list. This secures his election and there remain 750 list votes still available. These are attributed to Candidate B., the candidate second in order on the list. Candidate B. received 500 preference votes, and his total, with the addition of the 750 list votes, now amounts to 1,250. This total is less than the "electoral quotient," and, as C. has obtained 3,000 votes, a number higher than B.'s total, C. takes precedence of B. The two candidates chosen from List No. 1 would, in this case, be A. and C.

459. It is quite conceivable that there may be another candidate lower down who has already received more. That greatly depends on the order they are down on the list?—If a candidate obtains a number of votes equal to the "electoral quotient," or approximating to the "electoral quotient," then, however far down the list he may be, he must be brought up to such a position as would entitle him to election.

460. No matter how far down the list he is?—If he obtains a number of votes equal to the quotient.

461. In this case there was great discrepancy between B. and C.; but supposing they were more or less evenly divided, it might be conceivable that B. would,

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[Continued.]

with the assistance of the votes from the head of the list, get more than C. has?—That is the usual case, in which the successful candidates obtain sufficient votes from the total of the list votes to secure their election in the order in which they appear upon the list.

462. What objection is there to the order of preference being decided by the actual votes received. Why should not the order in this list be, first, C.?—That raises the question which we debated in considering the single transferable vote, as to whether we can secure a true result by allowing each elector one vote without the privilege of transfer. We have shown that in some cases it would be possible for a popular candidate to attract to himself so many votes that the section of the party represented by that popular candidate might be deprived of its full share of representation. M. Van den Heuvel, formerly Minister of Justice, who took a very responsible part in carrying the law through the Belgian Parliament, discussed this provision with me—the privilege accorded to the party organisations of arranging the order of the candidates—and he defended it most vigorously on the ground that the party as a whole had the right to determine which of its members should be elected. As he said, in the absence of the provision referred to, it might happen that some candidate would be elected in preference to one who was more generally approved of by the party. Suppose the party is strong enough to return three candidates but no more, and that five-sixths of the party are in favour of candidates A., B., and C., whilst the minority, one-sixth, are ardently in favour of candidate D., it would be necessary that the majority of the party should cleverly divide their votes equally between the candidates A., B., and C. in order to prevent the possibility of candidate D. being elected by a small minority of the party. A little reflection will show that in the absence of any such provision the popular candidate of the majority, say A., might attract too large a proportion of the votes, thereby allowing D. to pass B. or C. But if the electors had the privilege of indicating their preferences, as we propose in the single transferable vote, such a result would be impossible. Each section of the party would obtain its fair share of representation without this preliminary arrangement of the party list by the party associations.

463. That is one of your main reasons for preferring the transferable vote to the list system?—That is one of the reasons; but there is also another reason why the provision for transfer is of value. I think I have shown, in my memorandum, that the list systems keep bodies of electors absolutely apart from one another, and I contend that in actual life there is not that very sharp division between parties which a list system presupposes. There must always be a border land between parties; a number of electors whose sympathies are between those two parties, and would, in certain contingencies, give their votes to a candidate either of one party or a candidate of the other party. I think that fact was brought out in the figures at our model election, in which a large number of Liberals gave, at a very early stage of the proceedings, a preference for Mr. Henderson. Under the Belgian list system that indication of sympathy would have been impossible. Mr. Henderson would have figured upon one list, the Liberals would have figured upon another list, and it would have been impossible for any transfer of votes to take place from one side to the other. There is another reason, and I refer to it in my memorandum, in which I show that in the absence of the provision of transfer between lists, it may happen that two small lists, which together number more than a quota of votes, are deprived of representation. I was present at a demonstration of the list method with the d'Hondt rule at Lille, organised by the French Proportional Representation Society. On that occasion the lists presented contained Lists A, B, C, and D. The total votes were 11,000. The two smaller lists between them polled 2,000 votes, but only one obtained representation and that only one representative. A question was asked by a man in the audience: Why is it not possible to transfer the votes recorded for List D to List C, so that Lists C and D between them should obtain their fair share of representation?—It

might easily be that these two lists were presented by two branches of the socialist party, or even by two branches of the Liberal party, and, were the power of transfer in force, a large number of those voters might have indicated that their votes should be transferred to the other list if they were not sufficiently large by themselves to obtain representation, so that the single transferable vote not only enables those electors who are not tied wholly to party traditions to dispose of their votes in the way in which they desire, but it also allows lists to obtain their full share of representation without the arrangement of cartels, as in Belgium, or without the provision of combined lists as it figures in the Finnish law.

464. Is there any movement in other countries to copy the Belgian list system—in France for instance?—There is a very important movement in France, and the proposals advocated by different French deputies and also by the French Proportional Representation Society have been examined by an official commission. The French Proportional Representation Society desired to imitate very closely the Belgian precedents, but not so closely as to include the provision of voting by marking at the head of the list. It desired, however, to confine electors to voting for one or other of the lists. It suggested that the order of candidates within each list should be secured by means of the limited vote. These proposals were examined by this official commission, which reported that it was impossible to approve of such a limitation of the elector's freedom. "*Nous ne pouvons laisser si étroitement enchaîner, garrotter, ligotter l'électeur proclamé souverain et qui doit en tout cas être libre.*" The committee recommended the use of the limited vote without the restriction advocated by the League. In a further report issued in 1907, this committee again emphasised the necessity of leaving the elector quite free in the choice of candidates, and a new Bill, drafted by the committee, provided that each elector should have as many votes as there were deputies to be elected, and that he should be allowed to accumulate the whole, or several of his votes upon any one candidate. This would certainly give greater freedom to the elector, but the work of counting the votes under such a system would be enormously increased.

465. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) Is not that the school board system?—With this difference: that you would not only have to obtain the votes for each candidate, but would have to proceed to the additional work of arranging the votes for each list as well. I would like to add that this proposal of the French Commission is in force in several of the Swiss cantons. The cumulative vote has been introduced into the law for the canton of Basle City, but here the elector is not permitted to accumulate more than three votes upon any one candidate.

466. In your memorandum there is the expression *case de tête* list?—That expression refers to the square at the head of the list. I think that a list system which endeavours to conform to natural elastic political conditions becomes complex, whilst the single transferable vote easily adapts itself to changing political conditions.

467. (Lord Loches.) When do you say the official result of the Ghent election was given?—At midnight on the Monday following the day of the election.

468. It was quite settled then?—Yes, the full details were ascertained at that time.

469. Is there ever any discrepancy between the unofficial forecast and the actual result?—The unofficial forecast is necessarily rough. The names of the elected candidates could not in every case be given.

470. How long would it take to obtain a result under this single transferable system?—I suggest that in a town like that of Birmingham, or even Glasgow, the result might be known on the following day. I also add that the result of the first count would be ascertained very early in the course of that day, and that first count would give a very clear indication as to the way in which the election as a whole had gone.

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[Continued.]

471. (*Chairman.*) I think the Commission are satisfied with your comparison between the list system and the single transferable vote system. Now we should like to go through your memorandum on the German General Election of 1907*?—Before we leave the Belgian system may I add this: I have brought with me the instructions issued by the Belgian Ministry of the Interior to their returning officers, and I think it may possibly be the case, and it certainly is so in Tasmania, that with a proportional system instructions might with advantage be issued from a central office giving precise guidance to the returning officers on every point associated with the conduct of the election.

472. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Something of that kind was done when the Ballot Act of 1872 was brought into force, I think?—I was not aware of it. These instructions are issued regularly in Belgium.

473. (*Chairman.*) Surely the Local Government Board issues some sort of instruction now?—I do not know to what extent instructions are issued in England. I know that in Belgium and in Tasmania very complete instructions are issued. I would like to add, with reference to Tasmania, that the elections under the single transferable vote, and with the method in which chance will be eliminated wholly, will take place on the 30th of this month. I have received from the chief electoral officer of Tasmania a pamphlet, which has been issued under public authority, in which precise instructions are given to the returning officers.

474. The German system is a system of second ballot, and a very complete form of second ballot. The second ballot is practically the same wherever it is in operation?—In effect it is. In Germany only the two candidates who are highest on the first election proceed to the second election.

475. In France all candidates can do so?—They can, but in practice they do not.

476. In effect the second ballot rather tends to do away with the minority, and makes the majority stronger usually, does it not?—I will put it in another way, that the representation of any party, whether large or small—unless the party is so large as to command a majority in the majority of districts—the representation of any party, large or small, depends, in the case of a second ballot, upon the attitude taken towards it by the smallest parties at the second ballot. Therefore there is no general conclusion to be drawn as to what effect it will have upon the representation of any particular party.

477. The tendency would be for a third party, say the Labour party, to obtain few representatives under the system of the second ballot?—In all probability.

478. So from a proportional point of view it has rather a tendency against than for the representation of minorities?—Undoubtedly against the representation of minorities.

479. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Does not it operate unfairly on the Social Democrats in Germany?—In Germany; the evidence is very complete on that point.

480. Is there any demand on the part of the Social Democrats for the abolition of the second ballot?—I have not heard of any very strong demand for the abolition of the second ballot in the German Reichstag. I have only noted adverse comments coming from Dr. Karl Blind.

481. Is there a demand for such a system as the single transferable vote?—The proportional representation systems are very much in favour, in the southern parts of Germany, Würtemberg, and Saxony; and in discussions in the Prussian Chamber there has been a demand that the northern parts should follow the more democratic systems adopted in southern Germany.

482. The systems are more democratic in every respect in southern Germany?—Yes, in every respect.

483. (*Chairman.*) You say in Germany only the first two on the list are allowed to compete in the second ballot?—Yes.

484. So it depends really on those who originally voted for the third or fourth candidates, as to how they distribute their votes between the first two at

the subsequent ballot?—Yes, and that gives rise to a great deal of bargaining for the support of those minorities. But in Germany certainly the Social Democrats lost very considerably through the action of the smaller parties.

485. It reduced them from 90 to 43?—From 73, whilst in one year, 1903, taking a limited portion of Germany—Saxony—when the Socialists were favourably regarded, they won 18 seats at the first ballot and then they were still able to win four further seats at the second ballot, with the result that they obtained 22 seats out of the 23 seats allotted to Saxony.

486. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) So that in that case they were helped by the second ballot?—They were helped; that is to say, the second ballot in no sense mitigated the anomalies which were associated with the system of single member constituencies. The Social Democratic party, being in a majority, practically monopolised the representation allotted to Saxony.

487. (*Chairman.*) Except that the system prevents any representative being elected by a minority of votes?—It is so. We might compare Saxony with Wales. The second ballot would not enable a Conservative to obtain representation in Wales any more than it enabled the minorities of Saxony in 1903 to obtain representation.

488. Now in a town like Cardiff, for instance, would it not be possible for a Conservative to obtain a seat? The three parties, I understand, are more or less evenly divided?—Then it would depend more or less on the action of the smallest party. If at the second ballot there remained in the contest the Conservative and the Liberal parties, then the position between those two would rest in the hands of the third party, the Labour party. If there was such a thing as an alliance, or a temporary alliance, between the Labour and the Conservative parties, it would be possible for the Conservatives then to obtain representation. But the position of that Conservative candidate would not be very enviable, and he would not find it, I think, very pleasant when he was in the House of Commons.

489. To compare that case with the single transferable vote in a single member constituency, do you think there would be more chance of the minority obtaining an occasional representative?—No; the conditions would be the same. There is only a difference in mechanism.

490. In a single member constituency it has really the same effect?—It would have the same effect.

491. Only it is all done in the one operation?—And the Conservative candidate, if elected by such means, would, as in the second ballot, know that he was really dependent for his seat upon the Labour party. As has been shown and commented upon by all French politicians, the position of a deputy who represents two distinct streams of political thought is far from pleasant to himself or conducive to the good working of the Parliamentary machine. M. Yves Guyot has stated that deputies elected by means of a second ballot sometimes give a vote in one direction representing the opinion of the party to which the deputy belongs, and at other times has reversed that vote on the strong protest of the minority whose votes were needed in order to carry him through the election, and whose continued support in the future would also be necessary to secure his return. Therefore, the effect of the second ballot not only does not secure minority representation, but it has in my opinion the very disastrous effect of placing the minority at the time of the election in the position of deciding between the two other parties, and, after the election, of exercising a very undue influence upon the action of the member returned—his position is always unstable or equivocal.

492. In actual practice that is found to be the case?—Yes, in France.

493. Is there a movement to do away with the second ballot there?—A very strong movement, and a movement supported by politicians of all types—by the leaders of the Socialists, like M. Jaurès, by ex-Ministers like M. Poincaré, and moderate politicians like M. Deschanel. In fact, there is now a group banded together in the Chamber of Deputies, amounting to about 250, who desire above all things to replace the second ballot by a system of proportional representation, largely

* See page 42.

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because they hope to give a greater element of stability to the character and composition of the Chamber of Deputies, and to re-establish the position of each individual deputy upon a more satisfactory basis. The French Commission, to which reference has been made, has reported that the great advantage of a system of proportional representation would be to dispense with the bargainings associated with the second ballot.

494. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Do they express an opinion in favour of any particular form of proportional representation?—Yes, for a modification of the Belgium system. The method of allotting seats to the various lists would be in accordance with the d'Hondt rule followed in Belgium; but they recommend now that each elector should have as many votes as there are deputies to be elected, and that he should have the additional privilege of distributing or accumulating them upon any candidate in any list which he himself prefers.

495. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Therefore they do not recommend the single transferable vote?—They do not.

496. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Would that system make the counting very complicated?—I think very complicated. It would have all the disadvantages of the cumulative vote with the additional work of apportioning these votes to lists. There is one point on the question of the single transferable vote versus list systems to which perhaps reference might be made, and that is, that the single transferable vote is favoured in English-speaking countries. This is a fact, I think, of which cognisance must be taken. The South African Convention has approved of the single transferable vote. It is advocated in Australia. It is in use among Canadian trade unions. It is more familiar than the list system to the English public.

497. (*Lord Lochee.*) It is partly in use in the United States, too?—It has been in use in limited forms.

498. Have not they established it in Oregon?—It is not yet in force, and it has been found that the terms

of the resolution carried by popular vote would not enable the Legislature to introduce the single transferable vote in the form that we advocate it, because there was no provision made in that resolution for enlarging the constituencies.

499. But they have carried an amendment to the Constitution to effect some sort of proportional representation?—Yes, and the system finally recommended has been made to fit in with the previous provisions of the Constitution. The popular vote did not carry authority beyond the introduction of a system of proportional representation. I was going to conclude by saying that the fact of its being more familiar to the English public, other things being equal, is distinctly a reason, if it is shown that the single transferable vote is practicable, why it should be given a preference over other systems. It is desirable, in my opinion, that the voting methods throughout the Empire should approximate to one another.

500. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Is it within your knowledge that a Committee has been appointed in Canada?—Yes, on the motion of Mr. Monk, one of the members of the Canadian House of Commons, and the Proportional Representation Society of England has already received applications for copies of the publications issued by the society.

501. Do you propose to give evidence before the Committee?—I have not been asked to give evidence before that Committee. I have not the least doubt that there are a great number of men who are quite competent to give evidence in Canada.

502. I meant does your society propose to give evidence?—There is a society in Canada of which there is a secretary in Toronto.

503. (*Chairman.*) Will you put the three memoranda you have referred to to-day in as evidence?—Yes. (*The same were handed in.*)

MEMORANDA handed in by Mr. J. H. HUMPHREYS.

A.

A COMPARISON OF LIST METHODS OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WITH THE SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE.

Distinctions of a General Character.

A list system of proportional representation is based primarily upon the representation of parties as such, whilst the system of the single transferable vote is based upon the direct representation of electors.

"List" systems of various types have been adopted by several Swiss Cantons, Belgium, Finland, and Sweden, and have received the approval of a French Parliamentary Committee. The Single Transferable Vote, however, is used in the election of members of the Upper House in Denmark, and is preferred by the advocates of proportional representation in English-speaking countries.

The single transferable vote was embodied in the Tasmanian Act of 1896, and again in the more recent Act of 1907; it has figured in all the Bills presented at various times to the Parliaments of the States of Victoria, South Australia, West Australia, and also in the Bill presented in 1902 to the Commonwealth Parliament. The single transferable vote has been incorporated in the draft Constitution approved of by the South African National Convention, whilst the Trades and Labour Congress, the chief labour organisation of Canada; the Toronto District Labour Council, and the Winnipeg District Trades Council employ this method in the elections of their committees.

The single transferable vote is equally applicable for the election of a single officer, such as the mayor of a council or the president of a congress, or the agent of a trades union, &c. The Northumberland miners have used this method for the last 20 years in the elections of their agents, whilst this same method is used in Queensland and West Australia, instead of holding a second ballot in the election of members of Parliament. It has been adopted by the Metropolitan Counties Branch of the British Medical Association, and for

such non-political bodies it would appear to be preferable to a system of competing lists.

Continental Preference for "List" Systems.

It would appear that the list system of proportional representation was adopted in Switzerland, because that system was more easily grafted upon previous electoral conditions. Prof. Ernest Naville, who for more than 40 years has been the leading advocate of electoral reform in Switzerland, in a letter addressed to Miss Spence, of Adelaide, South Australia, on the 4th October 1894, wrote as follows:—

"The Swiss Cantons have adopted the system of competing lists. I do not think the system is the best, but as it involved the least departure from customary practices, it was the system for which acceptance could be more easily obtained. My ideal is a system which leaves the electors face to face with the candidates without the intervention of lists presented by parties, that is to say, that the method of voting indicated at the end of the pamphlet* forwarded by you has my preference. It is the system which I (inspired by the works of Mr. Hare) first proposed in Geneva, but, in order to obtain a practical result, account has to be taken of the habits and prejudices of the public to which the appeal is made, and the best must often be renounced in order to obtain what is possible in certain given circumstances."

In a further letter Prof. Naville is even more emphatic:—

"I consider," says he, "the Hare system preferable to that of competing lists. I have always thought so. I have always said so. But our Swiss people are so accustomed to the *scrutin de liste*, or multiple vote, that we could not obtain from them the profound modification which would have been necessary to pass to the Hare-Spence system."

* A report of a meeting held at the residence of Prof. J. Westlake, K.C.

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There is, however, an additional reason why this system has found favour upon the Continent. Many Continental politicians consider that parties as such are alone entitled to representation in Parliament. In England, on the other hand, representation, theoretically, has never been based upon parties. Electors are free to combine and do combine, and the single transferable vote secures the greatest possible freedom of choice and of action for the elector. Even if representation is based upon parties, as in the list systems, it becomes necessary to determine the degree of liberty to be allowed to the individual elector in the exercise of the franchise.

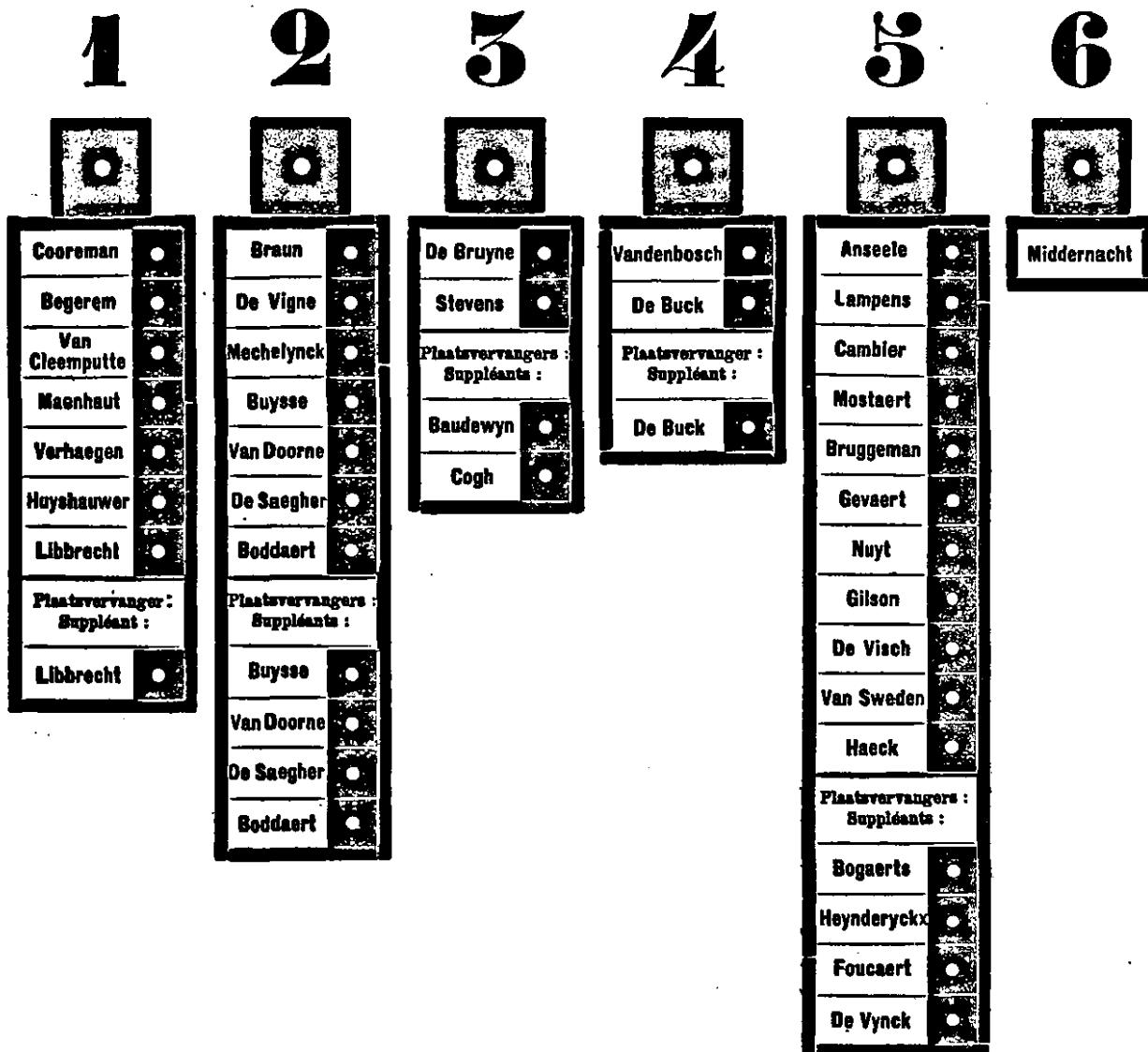
The "List" System in its simplest Form.

The Belgian system of proportional representation is perhaps the simplest of the list systems, but although simple in form its structure is based upon a very careful examination of the requirements of a satisfactory system of representation. For the purpose of Parliamentary elections each of the nine provinces of Belgium is divided into large constituencies. Brussels, which forms a constituency by itself, returns as many as 21 members, but several of the smaller constituencies return as few as three representatives. A ballot paper is of considerable assistance in the elucidation of an electoral method, and a copy of the paper used in the elections at Ghent in 1908 is therefore submitted. A list, as will be seen from the ballot-paper, may consist of but one name.

number, and the lists are then published. In the specimen ballot paper, list No. 1 was presented by the Catholics; No. 2 by the Liberals; No. 3 by those Socialists who were dissatisfied with their party's list; No. 4 by the small tradesmen; No. 5 by the official Socialists; whilst No. 6 contains the name of a candidate standing as an independent. It will be observed that each of the first five lists is divided into two parts separated by the word "Suppleants"; the candidates so described are not taken into account in the actual election of representatives; they are, however, voted for in the same way and at the same time as the other candidates, and are called upon (in the order determined by the result of the election) to fill any vacancy occasioned by the retirement or death of a duly elected representative belonging to the same list. This arrangement obviates the necessity for by-elections and the relative strength of parties remains the same from the time of one election to the next. The order in which the names of the candidates appear upon the lists is arranged by the organisations responsible for their presentation.

The Act of Voting.

In the Belgian, as in nearly every list system, a vote has two aspects: it is a vote for the list as such, and at the same time a vote of preference for a particular candidate, or for the particular arrangement of candidates approved of by the party organisation. In the Canton of Soleure in Switzerland each elector is invited



The Presentation of Lists.

Fifteen days before the date of the election lists of candidates which, before presentation, must have received the support of at least 100 electors, are sent to the returning officer. After verification of the qualification of the candidates and of the electors presenting the lists, each list is given an official

first to record his vote for a list as a separate act, and, secondly, to vote for the particular candidates he prefers.

In Belgium, although each constituency returns several members, each elector has but one choice for each vote to which he is entitled—a choice which can be recorded in four different ways. In each case the act

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[Continued.]

of voting consists in pencilling the white spot contained in one or other of the black squares at the head of the lists, or against the names of individual candidates. In the first place, the elector may vote by blackening the spot at the head of the list. The significance of such a vote is, that the elector votes for the list, and, at the same time, approves of the order in which the candidates have been arranged by the party organisation. All the party organisations and journals advise their supporters to vote in this way.

Secondly, the elector may vote by blackening the white spot against the name of one of the "effective" candidates on one of the lists. Such a vote implies that the elector votes for the list on which the candidate's name appears, but that, instead of approving of the order in which the candidates have been arranged, he prefers the particular candidate he has marked. The third and fourth methods are but variations of the second. The elector can indicate a preference for one of the supplementary candidates, or he can indicate preferences for an effective and also for a supplementary candidate. In brief, the elector votes for one of the lists, and either approves of the list as arranged by the party, or indicates the change he desires.

This method of voting is extremely simple, but although this is so, the four different ways in which the voter can record his vote must be indicated in the instructions to the electors. If the elector blackens the white spot at the head of the list, and, in addition, gives a vote of preference to some particular candidate the paper is spoiled.

The Apportionment of Seats to Lists.

It is the method by which seats are allotted to the respective lists that ensures to each party its proportionate share of representation. To participate in the distribution of seats a list need not poll a majority, but only a certain proportion of the votes cast, and the number of representatives awarded to each party is determined by the rule formulated by Professor d'Hondt. The working of this rule can best be shown by an illustration. Let it be assumed that three lists have been presented; that they have obtained 8,000, 7,500 and 4,500 votes respectively, and that there are five vacancies to be filled. The rule provides that the total number of votes for each list shall be divided successively by the numbers 1, 2, 3 and so on, and the resulting numbers arranged thus:—

List No. 1.	List No. 2.	List No. 3.
8,000	7,500	4,500
4,000	3,750	2,250
2,666	2,500	1,500

The five highest numbers (five being the number of vacancies to be filled) are then arranged in order of magnitude as follows:—

8,000	-	-	(List No. 1).
7,500	-	-	(List No. 2).
4,500	-	-	(List No. 3).
4,000	-	-	(List No. 1).
3,750	-	-	(List No. 2).

The lowest of these numbers, 3,750, is called the "common division" or the "electoral quotient," and form the basis on which the seats are allotted. The number of votes obtained by each of the lists is divided by the "common divisor" thus:—

8,000	divided by 3,750 = 2 with a remainder of 500.
7,500	" 3,750 = 2.
4,500	" 3,750 = 1 with a remainder of 750.

The first list contains the "electoral quotient" twice, the second twice, and the third once, and the five seats are allotted accordingly. The special feature of d'Hondt's rule is now seen: each party obtains one representative for every "quota" of voters which it can rally to its support, all fractions of "quotas" being disregarded.

The Determination of the Successful Candidates.

The seats having been apportioned to the respective lists, it remains to determine which of the candidates are to be declared elected. In the example already taken, assume that List No. 1 consists of three candi-

dates, A, B, and C, arranged in the order named, and that the 8,000 supporters of the list have given their votes as follows:—

Votes at the head of the list	4,000
Preferential votes for A.	500
" " B.	500
" " C.	3,000
Total	8,000

Candidate A, being the first in order on the list, has the first claim on the votes recorded for the list. The "electoral quotient" is 3,750 and A's total, 500, is raised to this number by the addition of 3,250 votes taken from those recorded for the list. This secures his election, and there remain 750 list votes still available. These are attributed to candidate B, the candidate second in order on the list. Candidate B received 500 preference votes, and his total with the addition of the 750 list votes, now amounts to 1,250. This total is less than the "electoral quotient" and, as C has obtained 3,000 votes—a number higher than B's total—C takes precedence of B. The two candidates chosen from List No. 1 would, in this case, be A and C. The order in which the supplementary candidates are declared elected is ascertained in the same way.

The Organisation of an Election.

Through the courtesy of the returning officer, M. Steyaert, President of the Tribunal of First Instance, I was enabled to follow the details of the elections for the constituency of Ghent-Eecloo. This constituency was entitled to elect eleven members of the House of Representatives and five Senators. The constituency was divided into 350 polling districts, the maximum number of electors for a district being 500. To each district was assigned a polling place in charge of a presiding officer, appointed by the returning officer of the district; the presiding officer was assisted by four citizens, each of whom was required to be in possession of the maximum number of votes, and to be at least 40 years of age. In addition, the party organisations sent duly accredited witnesses to watch against possible fraud, and to assure themselves of the absolute regularity of the proceedings, which commenced at 8 a.m. Each elector had to present his official "summons" to vote, and received from the presiding officer one, two or three ballot papers according to the number of votes to which he was entitled. The elector took the papers to a private compartment, as in an English election, marked them, placed them in the ballot box and received back his official letter, now stamped—evidence, if need be, that he had carried out the obligation imposed upon him by law. At 1 p.m. the poll was closed; the ballot boxes were opened, and the ballot papers counted in the presence of the assessors and party witnesses, for the purpose of ascertaining that all papers in the possession of the presiding officer at the opening of the poll had been duly accounted for.

In order to maintain, as far as possible, not only the secrecy of the individual vote, but the secrecy of the vote of any locality, the votes of three polling places were counted together, the grouping of polling places for this purpose having been previously determined by lot. Thus, the votes counted at the Town Hall (polling district No. 1) were those recorded in the districts Nos. 1, 112 and 94. The proceedings were directed by the presiding officer of the first polling place, assisted by the presiding officers of the other two. The only other persons present were witnesses representing the three chief parties. The counting commenced soon after 3 p.m., and was completed, both for the Senate and Chamber, by 7 p.m. The papers were sorted according to the votes list given for each list, subsidiary heaps being made for those candidates who had received individual votes of preference. A separate heap was made of spoiled and blank voting papers, but it was evident from the very commencement of the proceedings that the method of voting had presented no difficulty to the elector. Of the 1,370 votes recorded in these three

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polling districts for candidates for the Chamber there were but 26 spoiled papers; of these 13 were blank, indicating that the voters, although attending the poll, did not wish to record any opinion. The 13 other papers showed in nearly every case some confusion in the mind of the elector with the elections for the communal councils, when the elector can give several votes of preference. The official returns, after endorsement, not only by the presiding officers, but by the party witnesses, were forwarded by post to the returning officer, whose duty it was to prepare the returns for the whole constituency. The figures for each district were given to the press at the close of the count, and special editions of the journals containing the probable result of the election were issued the same evening.

The compilation of the returns for the whole constituency took place on the following day. The returning officer presided, and was assisted by four assessors, a secretary and three witnesses, who attend on behalf of the chief parties. In addition there were two professional calculators, who were responsible for the accuracy of the arithmetical processes. The proceedings, in brief, consisted in extracting the details of the returns furnished by the 120 counting places. The final sheet for each list showed not only the total number of votes obtained by the party, but the number of votes of preference recorded for each candidate.

The task was accomplished with perfect regularity and despatch; the figures were checked at each stage, but as the number of votes polled in the double election (for the Senate and for the Chamber) amounted to no less than 270,892, it is not surprising that the compilation of the final figures which commenced at 9 a.m. was not completed until midnight.

Earlier Methods of Allotting Seats to Lists.

The rule adopted in the Belgian system for distributing seats to the various lists is an attempt to avoid the defects and inconveniences of earlier methods. The first rule—a very simple one—was adopted because, in the words of Prof. Naville, "it seemed most intelligible to the general public." The grand total of votes polled by the different lists was divided by the total number of seats, and the distribution of seats was based upon the quotient, or "quota," thus obtained. The total of each list was divided by the quota for the purpose of ascertaining the number of seats to which it was entitled. The answers (as will be seen from the following simple example) usually contained fractions. Assume that seven seats are to be distributed among three lists A, B, C; that the grand total of votes is 7,000, and that the respective lists have polled as follows:—

List A	-	-	-	2,850	votes.
" B	-	-	-	2,650	"
" C	-	-	-	1,500	"
Total				-	7,000

The quotient in this case is 1,000. The totals of the lists A, B and C contain the quotient twice, twice and once respectively, but in each case with a remainder, and it is the remainder that constitutes the difficulty. According to the earliest "list" schemes the remaining seats were allotted to the lists having the largest remainders, and, in the example given, lists A and B would each receive an additional seat.

Party organisers were not slow to perceive that it was advisable to obtain as many of the largest remainders as they could, and considerable dissatisfaction arose in Ticino from the action of the Conservatives who very skilfully divided their forces into two groups, thereby obtaining additional seats. A simple example will explain. Assume that three deputies are to be elected, that the grand total of votes is 3,000 and that the party votes are as follows:—

Party A	-	-	-	1,600	votes.
" B	-	-	-	1,400	"
Total				-	3,000

The quota would be 1,000 votes; party A, having the larger remainder, would obtain two seats, and party B only one seat but if party B should present two lists

and arrange for the division of its voting force, the following result might ensue:—

Party A	-	-	-	1,600	votes.
" B1	-	-	-	700	"
" B2	-	-	-	700	"
Total				-	3,000

The quota would still be 1,000 votes, but party A would only obtain one seat, whereas Party B would obtain two, because each of its two lists would show a remainder larger than A's remainder.

The rule was modified and the seats remaining after the first distribution allotted to the strongest parties. But this was also far from satisfactory, as will be seen from the following example taken from a Ticino election* :—

Conservatives	-	-	-	614	votes.
Radicals	-	-	-	399	"
Total				-	1,013

The constituency to which the figures refer returned five members; the quotient therefore was 202, and the Conservatives obtained three seats on the first distribution and the Radicals one. As, under the rule, the remaining seat was allotted to the largest party, the Conservatives obtained four seats out of the five when obviously the true proportion was three to two.

The rule was further improved by reducing the importance of remainders in the allotment of seats. The total of each list was divided by the number of seats plus one. This yielded a smaller quota than the original rule and enabled more seats to be allotted at the first distribution. The final improvement took the form of devising a rule which should so allot the seats to different parties that after the first distribution there should be no seats remaining unallotted. This is the great merit of the Belgian or d'Hondt rule, which has already been fully described.

The d'Hondt rule certainly accomplishes its purpose; it furnishes a measuring rod by which to measure off the number of seats won by each list. Prof. Hagenbach-Bischoff, of Basle city, has formulated a different rule which is finding favour in Swiss cantons. The quota which will ensure the apportionment of all the seats among the lists at the first distribution is ascertained by trial. The first step in this rule is to divide the total number of votes polled by the number of seats plus one. The rule in practice yields the same results as the d'Hondt rule.

Criticism of the d'Hondt Rule.

The d'Hondt rule is not without its critics. As in the earlier Swiss methods objection was taken to the undue favouring of certain remainders, so in Belgium objection is taken to the fact that remainders are not taken into account at all. The Belgian rule works to the advantage of the largest party, a fact that many may consider as a point in its favour. A further simple example will show the force of this statement. Assume that 11 seats are being contested by three parties, whose votes are as follows:—

Party A	-	-	-	6,000	votes.
" B	-	-	-	4,800	"
" C	-	-	-	1,900	"
Total				-	13,700

Arrange these numbers in a line and divide successively by 1, 2, 3, and so on, thus:—

Party A.	Party B.	Party C.
6,000	4,800	1,900
3,000	2,400	950
2,000	1,600	633
1,500	1,200	475
1,200	960	380
1,000	800	316

* Rapport de la Commission du Suffrage Universel, 1905, page 45.

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The eleventh highest number, which constitutes the measuring rod, will be found to be 1,000; the largest party obtains six seats, the second party obtains four seats, with a remainder of 800 votes, and the third only one seat, with a remainder of 900 votes. The two smaller parties taken together poll 6,700 votes but only obtain five seats, as compared with the six seats obtained by the larger party with 6,000 votes, the two remainders, 800 and 900 votes which, together, constitute more than a quota, having no influence on the result of the election. Even if, in the allotment of seats, the largest party has a remainder of votes not utilised, yet this remainder necessarily bears a smaller proportion to the total of the votes polled than is the case with a smaller party. Thus the system works steadily in favour of the larger party.

The question of remainders, or votes not utilised in the distribution of seats, is of minor importance when the constituencies return a large number of members. When, for example, as in the city of Brussels, there are 21 members to be elected, the votes not utilized bear a small proportion to those that have been taken into account in the allotment of seats. In Belgium, however, there are several constituencies returning as few as three members, and there is naturally a demand that these constituencies should be united so that the method of distribution should yield more accurate results.

If the d'Hondt rule, like every other method of distribution, is open to criticism from the point of view of theoretical perfection, it must be admitted that in practice it yields excellent results. The election at Ghent resulted in the return of six Catholics, three Liberals and two Socialists, and it would have been impossible to have allotted the seats more fairly. Under the old non-proportional method the Catholics would have obtained 11 representatives and the Liberals and Socialists none. The immeasurable improvement effected by every true proportional method is apt to be overlooked in the critical examination of the working of these methods in those extreme cases which rarely occur in practice.

Combined Lists and Cartels.

The steady working of the d'Hondt rule in favour of the larger parties has, however, not escaped the attention of advocates of proportional representation. Prof. Hagenbach-Bischoff has formulated the proposal that parties should be free to put forward combined lists, and that in the first allotment of seats the totals of the combined lists should be taken as the basis of distribution. The need of some such provision may be shown by an example used in illustration of the d'Hondt system at Lille, at a meeting held under the auspices of the French Proportional Representation League. A constituency with 11 members was taken; four lists, A, B, C and D, received 6,498, 2,502, 1,499 and 501 votes respectively; the d'Hondt rule made 928 the measuring rod and gave A seven members, B three, C one and D none. The question was asked as to why provision was not made for the transfer of the votes for list D to list C, so that if, for example, these lists were put forward by Radical-Socialists and by Socialists respectively the parties might obtain the additional seat to which their combined totals entitled. It will be seen that lists C and D with a total of 2,000 votes (more than twice 928) obtained but one representative, while list A with 6,498 votes obtained seven representatives.

Ligue pour la Représentation Proportionnelle.

Exemple: Une circonscription a ONZE représentants à élire.

Quatre listes obtiennent 11.000 voix.

La liste A obtient 6.498 voix.

La liste B obtient 2.502 voix.

La liste C obtient 1.499 voix.

La liste D obtient 501 voix.

On opère la division par 1, 2, 3, 4, &c., des chiffres obtenus par chaque liste. On obtient ainsi:—

1090.

Liste A.	Liste B.	Liste C.	Liste D.
6.498	2.502	1.499	501
3.249	1.251	749	250
2.166	834	499	
1.624	625		
1.299	500		
1.083			
928			
812			

Les ONZE plus forts chiffres se trouvent répartis dans les listes comme suit: Dans la liste A, 7. Dans la liste B, 3. Dans la liste C, 1. En effet:—

Liste A.	Liste B.	Liste C.	Liste D.
6.498	2.502	1.499	
3.249	1.251		
2.166	834		
1.624			
1.299			
1.083			
928			

En conséquence:

La liste A obtient 7 représentants.

La liste B obtient 3 représentants.

La liste C obtient 1 représentant.

La liste D obtient 0 représentant.

Total - 11

Prof. Hagenbach-Bischoff's proposal, which would meet this difficulty, has not been embodied in the Belgian law, but "cartels" (arrangements for the presentation of a common list) are formed between the Liberals and Socialists so as to lessen their loss of representation due to the working of the d'Hondt rule. The "cartels," however, do not give satisfaction, as experience shows that many Liberals who would vote for a Liberal list decline to vote for a "cartel" of Liberals and Socialists, whilst, on the other hand, extreme Socialists decline to support a Liberal-Socialist coalition. In the Finnish system, however, provision is made for the combination of lists in accordance with Prof. Hagenbach-Bischoff's suggestion, and, indeed, as the Finnish law, for other reasons, forbids each list to contain more than three names, some such provision was necessary in order to allow each separate party to nominate a full list of candidates.

The experience of the Belgian "cartels" would seem to show that even where party organisation and discipline are highly developed, many electors resent the disposal of their votes by a bargain between the organisations concerned. The single transferable vote, by allowing each elector to indicate his second choice in the way in which he himself prefers, would enable smaller parties to obtain their share of representation without involving a preliminary compact between party organisations. A list system seems to establish a rigid division between parties, whilst there is no such corresponding rigid division in the minds of many electors. The model elections conducted by the Proportional Representation Society cannot perhaps be accepted as a conclusive guide to the action of voters at a real election, yet the number of Liberals who, in the last of these elections, gave an effective preference to Mr. Henderson was very noteworthy. In the Belgian list system no such fluidity is possible, the Liberal electors would be shut off from any relation with the supporters of Mr. Henderson who would figure upon the Labour Party's list.

The different Methods of Determining the Successful Candidates.

As there are several ways of allotting seats to lists, so there are several ways of determining which candi-

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dates in each list shall be declared elected. In the earlier schemes (and the practice obtains in several Swiss cantons to-day) each elector has as many votes as there are members to be elected, and he may distribute (without the privilege of cumulating) those votes over the whole of the candidates nominated, selecting, if he desire, some names from one list, some from another, and some from another. After the number of seats secured by each list has been ascertained those candidates are declared elected who, in the respective lists, have obtained the highest number of individual votes.

The practice of voting for candidates belonging to different lists has evoked considerable discussion, and still gives rise to differences of opinion among the advocates of proportional representation on the Continent. At first sight there would appear to be nothing to discuss, and that there was no possible reason why the elector should not be allowed to exercise his choice in the freest manner. It has, however, been found that this privilege can be used in an unfair way. When each elector has as many votes as there are candidates, and is not permitted to accumulate his votes on any one, it usually happens that the votes obtained by individual candidates in any given list vary but little in number. When, then, in some elections, it was realised that the party could only obtain a certain number of seats, but that it had a few hundred votes to spare, some extreme partisans used these votes for the purpose of voting for the least competent men of their opponents' list, and their action sometimes resulted in the election of those men in preference to the more competent men of the party.

The danger from this cause would appear to be exaggerated, but although success has seldom attended the practice of "panachage," as it is called, the fear of a successful attempt has a disturbing influence. The Belgian parliamentary system suppresses "panachage" in the most effective way: each elector has but one vote. This simplification of the problem does not, however, dispose of all the difficulties in determining which candidates are to be declared elected.

The Belgian system confers upon the organisation presenting a list the right to arrange the order in which the candidates shall appear upon the list, and, further, it provides that the voter may approve of this arrangement by voting at the head of the list in the space provided for that purpose. Party organisations naturally advise their supporters to vote in this way. Public opinion is somewhat divided on this feature of the Belgian system, but M. Van den Heuvel, formerly Minister of Justice, who took a responsible part in the passing of the law, and with whom I discussed this provision, defended it most vigorously on the grounds that the party, as a whole, had a right to determine which of its members should be elected. In the absence of the provision referred to, it might happen that some candidate would be elected in preference to one who was more generally approved of by the party. This may be made clear by an example given by M. Van den Heuvel himself. A, B, C and D are candidates. Suppose that the party is strong enough to return three candidates, but no more, and that five-sixths of the party are in favour of candidates A, B and C, whilst the minority, one-sixth, are ardently in favour of candidate D. It will be necessary that the majority of the party (the five-sixths) should cleverly divide their votes equally between the candidates A, B and C in order to prevent the possibility of candidate D being elected by a small minority of the party. A little reflection will show that in the absence of any such provision the popular candidate of the majority, say A, might attract too large a proportion of the votes, thereby allowing D to pass B or C. Each provision of the Belgian system has been most carefully thought out, and, if it strengthens the hands of party organisations, it does so in order to secure the representation of the party by the candidates most generally approved. It may, however, be pointed out that had the single transferable vote been used the candidates A, B and C who, in M. Van den Heuvel's example, were supported by five-sixths of the party would have been sure of election;

there would have been no need to have conferred a special privilege upon party organisation.

The French Proportional Representation League, which, impressed with the simplicity of the Belgian system, desired to introduce it into France, refrained from advocating the adoption of the *case de tete* and suggested that the order in which candidates should be elected on each list should be determined by the votes of the electors. The French League in its first proposal recommended that each elector should, as in Belgium, have but one vote. It was soon realised that the popular candidate of the party might attract a large majority of the votes and that, in consequence, candidates might be elected who were the nominees of only a small section of the party. The League in its second proposal recommended the use of the limited vote—each elector having two votes when six deputies were to be elected, and three in larger constituencies. The association, however, followed the Belgian practice in confining the choice of the elector to candidates on one list. This proposition was examined in 1905 by the Commission du Suffrage Universel, which, in its report, declared that it was impossible to approve of such a limitation of the elector's freedom. "Nous ne pouvons," runs the report, "laisser si étroitement enchaîner, garrotter, ligotter l'électeur proclamé souverain et qui doit en tout cas être libre." The Committee recommended the use of the limited vote without the restriction recommended by the League. In a further report issued in 1907, this Committee again emphasised the necessity of leaving the elector quite free in the choice of candidates, and a new Bill, drafted by the Committee, provided that each elector should have as many votes as there were deputies to be elected, and that he should be allowed to accumulate the whole, or several of his votes, upon any one candidate. The cumulative vote has been introduced into recent Swiss laws, as in that of the canton of Basle City; the elector, however, is not permitted to cumulate more than three votes upon any one candidate. It will thus be seen that the single vote, the multiple vote without the privilege of cumulating, the limited vote and the cumulative vote have all been proposed or adopted as methods of determining which candidates shall be declared elected.

An Elastic List System necessarily Complex.

The description of the Swedish system given in the Blue Book* (Miscellaneous No. 3, 1907, Cd. 3501) refers only to the original proposals of the Swedish Government, but it is a sufficient indication of the difficulties experienced in introducing greater elasticity into a list system whilst, in the little pamphlet "The Finnish Reform Bill," published at Helsingfors in 1906, it is stated that the Finnish electoral law has aimed at *not* checking the liberty of the voters in making up the lists. It, therefore, not only allows the names of candidates to figure on more than one list, but even permits the voter to prepare a list of his own composed of any three of the candidates that have been duly nominated. In a word, whenever an attempt is made to introduce elasticity into the list system, whether by permitting combinations of lists, or by permitting names of candidates to appear in more than one list, or for the purpose of conferring upon the elector complete freedom in the exercise of his vote, then with each new facility so granted there arises a fresh complication in method, and the great virtue of the list system—its simplicity—disappears.

The Single Transferable Vote.

The single transferable vote secures all the advantages of freedom and of elasticity which the modern improvers of the list-system seek to attain, and in other respects compares quite favourably with them. The single transferable vote differs essentially from a list system in that a vote has but *one significance*—a vote is a vote for the candidate to whom it is given—and seats are allotted in accordance with the votes recorded for candidates.

* Reports from His Majesty's Representatives abroad on Proportional Representation in public elections.

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The question of remainders in small constituencies is more satisfactorily disposed of, for there is but one remainder—a section of electors less than the quota. In the list systems there may be two or three remainders which, between them, constitute more than a quota, and when constituencies are small, returning, say, five members only, the votes not used may form a considerable percentage of the whole. With the single transferable vote each successful candidate would in a constituency of the same size have secured one-sixth of the votes plus one, and, in the return of five members, over five-sixths of the votes would have been utilised. Looking at the distribution of seats from the party point of view it may be said that each party obtains a seat for every quota of votes it polls, and the odd seat, if any, represents the mean of the remaining votes. In the earlier list systems, certain fractions were given an enhanced value; in the d'Hondt rule, fractions are ignored; in the transferable vote, fractions are averaged.

All such devices as "combined lists," &c., are rendered needless by the operation of transfers. The question of "panachage" does not arise, because each elector has but one vote, and, to utilise that vote to the greatest advantage, he must indicate his true preferences. The further problems as to whether the party organisation should arrange the order of candidates, whether the elector should have a limited vote confined to one list, whether he should be permitted to accumulate votes upon any candidate in any list, or whether, as in Finland, lists should contain but three names in which the votes recorded are of descending values, all these problems disappear. Again, the majority in any party can always make sure of exercising its full share of influence; there is no necessity to arrange for an even distribution of votes over certain candidates as the simple device of making the vote transferable prevents the loss of voting power.

The Distribution of Surplus Votes.

There is one feature of the single transferable vote—the degree of exactitude required in the distribution of surplus votes—which has given rise to a considerable difference of opinion. The earlier advocates of the single transferable vote contented themselves with the proposal that "surplus" votes should be taken from the top of the heap of the successful candidate whose surplus votes were being distributed. The criticism was then made that an element of chance entered into this method of distribution. The matter was referred by Lord Avebury (then Sir John Lubbock) in 1885 to Prof. Stokes, the eminent professor of mathematics and secretary of the Royal Society, and it would appear from his opinion that the element of chance would, in parliamentary elections, be negligible. But, in order to meet the critics, the modern advocates of the single transferable vote propose that all the votes of the successful candidate shall be re-sorted into heaps corresponding to the next preferences marked on the papers, and that to each next preference there shall be allotted its proportionate share of the surplus. This is the scheme which was embodied in the Tasmanian Electoral Act of 1896, and was adopted by the Proportional Representation Society in its model elections of 1906 and 1908. The method is in every way practicable, and the Society's experiments confirm the more authoritative reports of the Tasmanian returning officer.

This new method, however, does not entirely satisfy the critics, as, although it removes the element of chance from the primary distribution of surplus votes, there still remains an infinitesimal element in any secondary distribution. The proportion transferred under the primary distribution is taken from the top of the successful candidate's heap, and should a fresh surplus arise as the result of the transfer, only the transferred portion is analysed for the purpose of the secondary distribution. Rules in which the remaining element of chance is wholly eliminated have been embodied in the new Tasmanian Act, and will be used in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

In a paper* prepared some 20 years ago, the Right Hon. J. Parker Smith, a Smith's prizeman, and formerly Member of Parliament for the Partick Division of Lanarkshire, analysed the three methods of distribution, and of the first says:—"It will thus be seen that it is only in the case of very closely-contested elections that the element of chance can affect the result. It will also be observed that the element of chance will not be of importance as between the different parties, but only as between different individual candidates of the same party, since in almost all cases the electors who are agreed upon the candidates they most desire will also mark for their second choice candidates of the same party." After explaining the second method, he makes this following comment: "To exclude chance wholly, these (the papers of the successful candidate) would have to be sorted into heaps according to the third name upon them, and an equal proportion taken from each heap. The figures in the first half of this paper are sufficient to show that such trouble would be wholly superfluous."

Mr. R. M. Johnston, Government Statistician of Tasmania, writing to *The Spectator* on November 9, 1907, stated that "Friends and foes of the system restrict their attention too much to details of lesser importance, such, for example, as the elimination of the final infinitesimal element of chance in the allocation of surplus votes." It was indeed found in the Tasmanian Parliamentary elections that the candidates who were finally elected, after all transfers had been made, were those who were at the head of the poll at the first count. The experience of Tasmania will, in all probability, repeat itself in the majority of elections; it has done so in the elections conducted by Canadian Trades Unions; and it has therefore been suggested that the single non-transferable vote in constituencies returning several members would, in practice, yield the same result as the single transferable vote. The single non-transferable vote was adopted by Japan in 1900, and the experience gained in parliamentary elections since that date show the need of making the vote transferable. It is true that the Japanese system allows men of independent mind and character, like Mr. Osaki, the Mayor of Tokio, and others, to retain their seats in Parliament, but the regular parties are unwilling to put forward more candidates than they hope to carry, because additional candidatures would imperil the prospects of the party. In the absence of open voting the party organisers cannot adjust the number of candidates to the party strength, and the fear of disaster constrains them to nominate no more candidates than they succeeded in carrying at the previous election. To some extent stagnation results. With the vote made transferable the party organisers would experience no fear in nominating additional candidates, the process of transfer would ensure to each party its full share of representation. The single vote then is made transferable to avoid the disadvantages of the Japanese system—disadvantages which are also associated with the use of the limited and cumulative vote—but the Tasmanian parliamentary elections confirm the statements of mathematicians that it is unnecessary in carrying out the transfers to proceed beyond the degree of exactitude prescribed in the Tasmanian Act of 1896, and followed in the model elections organised by the Proportional Representation Society.

By-Elections.

In the matter of by-elections, list systems have an advantage over the single transferable vote. With the list systems provision is made for the election of supplementary members belonging to the same list that shall take the place (in the order of their election) of any member that may die or retire during the lifetime of the Parliament. It will, therefore, be seen that under a list system the party representation remains unchanged from one election to another. In a word, by-elections are abolished. In the Tasmanian Act by-elections are retained, and whenever a vacancy occurs

* "Preferential Voting: The Transfer of Superfluous Votes," by J. Parker Smith, 1884.

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the whole of the constituency affected is polled. The single transferable vote is used, the quota in the case of a single vacancy being one-half plus one. If by-elections are retained, this is the simplest solution. There are, however, some obvious objections. The party which is in a majority in the particular constituency in which the by-election takes place may obtain an additional seat at the expense of some other party. On the other hand, the practice would doubtless spring up of allowing the party, in whose ranks the vacancy occurred, to nominate his successor at a by-election. With the cumulative vote casual vacancies were filled by the processes of co-option. The group to which the retiring or deceased member belonged submitted the name of the successor, and the nomination was usually ratified by the School Board as a whole. With the limited vote by-elections were retained and the whole constituency polled. With the shortening of parliaments, however, by-elections will lose a great deal of their importance.

Practicability.

Experience shows quite conclusively that proportional methods, even the most complex of list systems, present no great difficulty to the voter. The additional work thrown upon the returning officer varies considerably, but in every country the returning officers have proved equal to their task. I have been present at the Belgian elections; I have watched a small experiment in France; I have conducted illustrative elections in England; I have been present at the counting of English parliamentary and municipal elections, and I have come to the conclusion that the different schemes, judged from the point of view of facility in counting of votes, may be arranged in the following order:—

- (1) The single transferable vote when the surplus votes are taken from the top of the successful candidate's heap.
- (2) The Belgian list system with its single vote.
- (3) The single transferable vote with the surplus votes distributed proportionately to the next preferences.*
- (4) List systems in which more than one vote is recorded and, with these, the counting necessarily increases in difficulty with the complexity of the scheme.

The reasons for this conclusion are briefly these: Whenever the ballot paper (as in the Belgian system and with the single transferable vote) represents but one vote only, the process of counting consists of sorting papers according to the votes given, and then in counting the heaps of papers so formed. Whenever there is more than one vote recorded upon a ballot paper it becomes necessary to extract the particulars of each paper upon recording sheets. This is the case in the London Borough Council elections, when the *scrutin de liste* in its simple form is used, and when, as in the list system proposed by a Committee of the French Chamber, the elector may accumulate or distribute his votes as he pleases, selecting candidates from any or all the lists, this process of extracting the details of the ballot papers must involve considerable labour. By comparison, the process of sorting and counting ballot papers is extremely simple. The Belgian law makes provision for the employment of two "professional calculators," who are responsible for the accuracy of the arithmetical calculations, and if the proportionate form of the single transferable vote is adopted, it will be desirable that the returning officer should have two assistants whose special duty it should be to verify the accuracy of each stage of the process.

Conclusion.

In any comparison between the two main systems of proportional representation there is no need to understate the advantages of either. The results which have followed from the adoption of list systems on the Continent have shown how immeasurably superior these are to ordinary electoral methods. Even in the most rigid of these systems—the Belgian—there is within each party considerable freedom of opinion in respect of all political questions which do not spring directly

from the principles on which the party is based. It is claimed, however, for the single transferable vote that it is more elastic than the most complex of list systems, that it more freely adapts itself to new political conditions, and that in small constituencies returning, say, five or seven members, it yields better results. Moreover, this system, based as it is upon the direct representation of the electors, has appealed with greater force to English-speaking peoples; it has its advocates in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, as well as in England, and as a common electoral method for the British Empire is a desideratum in itself, the balance of advantages would seem to lie with the single transferable vote.

B.

SECOND BALLOTS ON THE CONTINENT.

Different Forms of the Second Ballot.

It would appear from the reports furnished by His Majesty's Representatives abroad* that the second ballot is in force, or has been tried, in the majority of Continental countries. The regulations adopted differ in detail, but reference need be made to the three chief types only.

In Germany the two candidates highest at the first poll proceed to a second election. In France all candidates who take part in the original election may stand again at the second election. At this second poll a relative, not an absolute, majority of votes is sufficient to ensure the election of a candidate. As a rule only the two candidates highest at the first election proceed to the poll a second time, and therefore, in practice, the German and French methods closely approximate to one another. In Belgium the country was divided for parliamentary purposes into multi-member constituencies. The candidates who received the support of an absolute majority of the electors voting were declared elected; the candidates next highest on the poll, but only so many as were equal to double the number of vacancies remaining to be filled, took part in a second ballot.

General Results of the System of Second Ballots.

The object of the second ballot, whatever its form, was to ensure that every elected candidate should have obtained the support of a majority of the electors voting in the constituency for which he was returned, and, generally speaking, this object was achieved. Looking, however, at the results of the system of second ballots as applied, not to a single constituency, but to the whole of the elections, it will be seen that it has not secured a more fully representative character to popularly elected bodies.

The second ballot, whilst ensuring that each successful candidate shall, in the final election, have received a majority of the votes polled, confers upon the smaller minorities (those not strong enough to reach the second ballot) the power of determining the share of representation which shall fall to the larger parties. The representation, therefore, of any section of political opinion depends not upon its own strength only, but very largely upon the attitude taken towards it by other parties at the second elections. No party is certain of representation unless in its own strength it can obtain an absolute majority in at least some of the constituencies. The largest party in the State, if its voting strength is evenly distributed, may be at the mercy of hostile combinations unless it is so large as to command a majority of votes throughout the country.

The Second Ballot may operate uniformly against one Party.

The second ballot affected adversely the representation of the Social Democrats in the German general elections of 1903 and 1907. In the latter elections the Social Democrats reached the second ballot in 91 constituencies; they were at the head of the poll at the first count in 44 of these constituencies, but only succeeded in retaining that position at the

* Cd. 3875, Miscellaneous No. 2 (1908).

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second ballot in 11; in the 47 constituencies in which they were second at the poll they were only able to improve their position in three cases. These figures show with what difficulty the German Social Democrats obtained representation in constituencies other than those in which, at the first elections, they were in an absolute majority.

Prof. Redlich, in an article, "The Working of Universal Suffrage in Austria," which appeared in *The Albany Review* in 1907, shows how the representation of the Social Democrats in that country suffered in the same way. "The Christian Socialists," he writes, "have 96 seats in the new House, the Social Democrats 86. . . . The number of seats won by them weighs still heavier in the balance when we reflect that in many second ballots the majority of the opponents of social democracy joined their forces against them. Not less instructive are the relative numbers of the votes recorded for each of the parties. Over a million votes were given to the Social Democrats, as against 531,000 for the Christian Socialists."

The Rome Correspondent of *The Morning Post*, in its issue of 19th September 1908, pointed out that the political defeat of Socialism at the elections of 1904 was partly due to the working of the second ballots. In not a few constituencies, like the second division of Rome, a rally of Clericals at the second ballot gave the victory to the Conservative Monarchists over the Socialists.

Temporary Coalitions at Second Ballots.

The combinations of parties against a more extreme party, as in the examples already given, may be perfectly legitimate and well grounded, but the coalitions at second ballots are not always of this character. Opportunity is sometimes taken at the second ballots by an advanced party to express its resentment at the action of a party somewhat less advanced than itself; on other occasions a party too weak to hope for representation itself seeks to create dissension in the ranks of its rivals. The instability of these temporary coalitions is well described in the report furnished by Sir Arthur Hardinge on the working of the second ballots in Belgium. "The system of second ballots," says he, "answered well enough so long as only two parties contested an election; but the moment the Socialist Party formed a distinct third party, after the establishment of universal suffrage in 1894, it began to act in a manner which produced unsatisfactory results. . . . The overwhelming victory of the Clerical Party in 1894 was largely due to the fact that in every second ballot between Catholics and Socialists the Liberals voted for the former, whilst in every second ballot between Catholics and Liberals, with the single exception of the Thuin Division, the Socialists preferred the Catholics, as the creators of universal suffrage, and as, in some respects, a more genuinely democratic party, to the Liberals, whom the Labour leaders regarded with peculiar hatred as the apostles of free competition and individualism. In 1896 the Socialists were in their turn the victims, as the Liberals had been in 1894, of the working of the system of second ballots. Liberal electors at these elections voted everywhere at the second ballot for Clerical against Labour candidates, with the result that the Clericals won every one of the 18 seats for Brussels, although the total number of Clerical electors in a total electorate of 202,000 was only 89,000, as against 40,000 Liberals and 73,000 ultra-Radicals and Labour men. Two years later the Liberals swung round to an alliance with the Socialists against the Clericals, and in several constituencies, owing to the system of second ballots, the Socialists, although actually in a minority, won all the seats with the help of the Liberals, who on the first ballot had voted unsuccessfully for Liberal as against both Catholic and Labour candidates. It was the practical experience of conditions such as these which gradually convinced all the Belgian parties that given a three-cornered fight in every, or nearly every, constituency, the only way of preventing a minority from turning the scales and

"excluding from all representation the views of nearly half the electorate was to adopt the system of proportional representation."

The influence of the second ballots in Belgium upon the representative character of the legislative Assembly is shown in its effects upon the fortunes of the Liberal party. In 1896 they had but 11 representatives in the Chamber; all their leaders had been driven from Parliament; their electoral associations had become completely disorganised save in some large towns, and in many constituencies they had ceased to take part in elections. Yet the results of the very first elections (1900), after the establishment of proportional representation, show that the Liberals were the second largest party in the State, and the opportunity of obtaining representation which the proportional system has afforded has shown that it is a party capable of still further growth and development.

Recent French elections furnish examples of the use of the second ballot for the purpose, not of obtaining representation, but of fostering dissension between other parties. At the last general election the Conservatives in the South of France were accused of having promised support at the second ballots to the Socialists. The leaders of the Socialists repudiated the suggested alliance, but there is no doubt that in several by-elections, at least, Socialists have owed their success to the temporary goodwill of the Conservatives. The by-election at Charolles last December is a case in point. At the first ballot the figures were as follows:—

M. Sarrien fils (Radical)	-	5,770	votes.
M. Ducarouge (Socialist)	-	4,367	"
M. Magnien (Conservative)	-	3,968	"

At the second ballot—

M. Ducarouge (Socialist)	-	6,841	"	elected.
M. Sarrien fils (Radical)	-	5,339	"	
M. Magnien (Conservative)	-	301	"	

It should be explained that the Conservative candidate, although his name still appeared upon the ballot paper, retired before the second election, and it is evident that the votes of many of his supporters were transferred to the Socialist candidate. This instance does not stand by itself, for the Paris Correspondent of *The Morning Post* states in the issue of the 6th April 1909, that "the successes of the Unified Socialists in the recent series of by-elections are in part to be attributed to the votes of the Reactionaries, who voted for the Unified candidates as being enemies of the Republic."

Whether the action of the Conservatives in making such use of their electoral power is, or is not, justifiable, it is evident that a combination of two extreme parties at the second ballot may affect most adversely the representation of a third party which is larger than either of its opponents. Moreover, the continued success of one of the extreme parties as the result of such combinations would not secure a fully representative character to the legislative Assembly.

The Position of the Elected Member.

The member elected as the result of the second ballot often finds himself in a specially difficult position. He owes his election to the alliance of groups which stand for different political ideas, and, in the opinion of French statesmen, this fact has a disturbing influence upon his action in the Chamber of Deputies. M. Deschanel, the ex-President of the Chamber, says of the second ballots that "their perplexing coalitions falsify the character of the popular verdict"; whilst M. Yves Guyot, an ex-Minister, declares that "the second ballots give rise to detestable bargainings which obliterate all political sense in the electors. In the Chamber of Deputies the second ballots produce incoherence both in policy and in votes, for the greater part of the Deputies are engaged in giving satisfaction to the electors which they truly represent, and to those minorities which were indispensable to their success." M. Raymond Poincaré, Senator and ex-Minister, condemns the system of second ballots in equally forcible language. "It will avail nothing," says he, "to replace one kind of constituency by another, if we do not suppress the gamble

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" of the majority-system and the jobbery of the second ballots (les coups de dé du système majoritaire et les maquignonnages des seconds tours)." M. Jaurès is equally of the opinion that the system of second ballots has a demoralising influence upon French political life.

It would appear that the German elections were not free from the same evil of bargaining. The late Karl Blind, writing in *The Nineteenth Century*, March 1907, stated that "In this last election the oddest combinations have taken place for the second ballots, in the various parts of the Empire, and within different States. There was no uniformity of action as to coming to a compromise between Conservative and Liberal, or Liberal and Social Democrat, or centre and any other party, as against some supposed common enemy who was to be ousted from his insufficient majority by a subsequent alliance between otherwise discordant groups, or who wanted to have his insufficient majority increased to an absolute one by the addition of the votes of one of the defeated candidates whose friends finally choose the 'lesser evil.'"

"To some extent these necessary, but sometimes rather sordid transactions are made all the more difficult through the very existence of separate States with 'Home Rule' Legislatures of their own. Political development has, in them, gone so far in a centrifugal sense that the nation has been sadly split up and the public mind too much divided into merely local concerns and issues.

"Irrespective of this baneful influence of a so-called 'Home Rule' state of things on the life of the nation at large, I must confess that the huckstering at the second ballots does not strike me as an ideal institution. It generally goes, in Germany, under the name of *Kuh-Handel* (cow bargain). It often brings out the worst symptoms of intrigue and political immorality. So it has, as above shown, done in the present instance."

These expressions of opinion on the part of individual statesmen and writers could be multiplied, but it is sufficient to add to them two declarations of a more official character. In a Report presented to the Belgian Senate in November 1899, it is pointed out that the press of all parties "were insistent in directing attention to the contradictions, the absurdities, the defects of the system of second ballots and demanded their suppression with a force that increased with every election." Further, in the report presented in 1907 to the French Chamber of Deputies by the Commission du Suffrage Universel, it is stated that "the abolition of the second ballots, with the bargainings to which they give rise, will not be the least of the advantages of the new system (proportional representation)."

Conclusion.

The system of second ballots then not only fails to secure a fully representative character to popularly elected bodies, but, in so far as it renders the position of the elected member unstable or equivocal, introduces a new element of uncertainty into the action of the legislative chamber. The second ballot does not go to the root of the evils of the single member constituencies. So long as we force the electors of one district, whatever their divisions of opinion, to be all represented by one man, the representation of the district will necessarily be incomplete. The problem which arises from the presence of three political parties, all of which are seeking representation, cannot be solved by a system of second ballots; it can only be solved by an electoral system which, within each constituency, will give to each party its just share of representation.

C.

A NOTE ON THE GERMAN GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1903 AND 1907.

The German Reichstag, which consists of 397 members, is elected by a system of single member constituencies. Every member, however, must have obtained a majority of the votes polled, either at a first

or second ballot, in the constituency for which he has been returned. The German Official Returns, "Statistik Der Reichstagswahlen," contained in three volumes, furnish very complete details of the elections, including the figures for the first and second ballots, and the summaries contained at the end of the Returns disclose a very striking divergence between the proportions of seats obtained and votes polled by the various political parties. These discrepancies have attracted general attention, and have usually been attributed to the great variation in the size of German constituencies, the disturbing influence of the second ballots being ignored. Both factors, however, affect the results although in wholly different ways, and in order to appreciate the influence of the second ballots it is necessary to consider the two factors separately. This will be facilitated by making a comparison between the results which would have been obtained without the second ballots with the results actually obtained. The following tables, the figures in which are based upon the official returns, give the votes polled and the seats obtained (with and without the system of second ballots) by the five principal groups:—

German General Election, 1903.

Parties.	Votes.	Results without Second Ballot.	Results with Second Ballot.
Social Democrats -	3,010,771 (31·7 per cent.)	122 (30·7 per cent.)	81 (20·4 per cent.)
Centre Party -	1,875,273 (19·7 per cent.)	104 (26·2 per cent.)	100 (25·2 per cent.)
National Liberals -	1,317,401 (13·9 per cent.)	32 (8·1 per cent.)	51 (12·8 per cent.)
Conservatives -	1,281,852 (13·5 per cent.)	79 (19·9 per cent.)	75 (18·9 per cent.)
Radical Parties -	872,653 (9·2 per cent.)	11 (2·8 per cent.)	36 (9·1 per cent.)

German General Election, 1907.

Parties.	Votes.	Results without Second Ballot.	Results with Second Ballot.
Social Democrats -	3,259,029 (28·9 per cent.)	73 (18·4 per cent.)	43 (10·8 per cent.)
Centre Party -	2,179,743 (19·3 per cent.)	101 (25·4 per cent.)	105 (26·4 per cent.)
National Liberals -	1,630,581 (14·5 per cent.)	47 (11·8 per cent.)	54 (13·6 per cent.)
Conservatives -	1,532,072 (13·6 per cent.)	91 (22·9 per cent.)	64 (21·2 per cent.)
Radical Parties -	1,233,933 (10·95 per cent.)	30 (7·6 per cent.)	49 (12·3 per cent.)

Redistribution.

The Social Democrats were affected to a greater extent than any other party by both the factors referred to. In 1903 the Socialists polled 31·7 per cent. of the votes and, at the first ballots, were at the head of the poll in 122, or 30·7 per cent. of the constituencies. In other words, if the system of second ballots had not

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been in force, the Social Democrats would have obtained very nearly their fair share of representation. If, in addition, there had been a redistribution of seats by which the size of constituencies had been equalised, the Social Democrats would have obtained more than their share of representation. The strength of the party lay in the large towns, and if, for example, Berlin had the additional eight seats to which it was entitled, nearly all of them would have fallen to the Social Democrats. Again, the three divisions of the district of Hamburg returned Social Democrats with overwhelming majorities. Were the representation allotted to Hamburg doubled, as it should be, all six seats would have fallen to the Social Democrats. An equalisation of the size of constituencies would have produced in 1903 the phenomenon with which we are familiar in England. The largest party would have secured a number of seats far in excess of that to which it was entitled by reason of its strength. In 1907 the Socialists polled 28·9 of the votes, but only succeeded in reaching the head of the poll at the first ballot in 73, or 18·4 per cent. of the constituencies. A redistribution of seats would have added to their representation in the large towns, and the first ballots would have yielded a result which would have corresponded more fairly with their polling strength.

In both years the system of second ballots has had the effect of reducing very considerably the representation of the Social Democrats. In the year 1903 the Social Democrats won 56 constituencies by absolute majorities and were engaged in the second ballots in 118 constituencies. In 66 of these constituencies they were at the head of the poll, but succeeded in maintaining this position at the second ballots in 24 only. In the remaining 52 constituencies they were second on the poll, and at the second ballots they were able to win only *one* of these seats. In these 118 constituencies the Socialists polled 1,170,000 votes at the first ballots, whilst the other parties polled 1,920,000. As a result of the second ballots the Socialists obtained 25 seats and the remaining parties obtained 93 seats.

The figures for the year 1907 tell a similar tale. At the first ballots the Social Democrats were at the head of the poll in 73 constituencies. The second ballots reduced this number to 43. They were engaged in the second ballots in 90 constituencies; they were at the head of the poll in the first ballot in 44 of these constituencies, but kept this position in 11 only; they were second on the poll in the remaining 46 constituencies and won in three cases only. In these 90 constituencies the Social Democrats polled at the first ballot 1,185,000 votes, whilst the other parties taken together polled 1,888,000 votes; the Socialists obtained 14 seats, the other parties obtained 76 seats.

In both these elections the second ballots affected very adversely the representation of the largest party. If this party, without the second ballot and with a fair distribution of seats, might have obtained more than its share of representation, then the second ballots would have acted as a corrective, but not necessarily so. There is no reason why the second ballots should not have added to the over-representation already obtained. This will be seen from the figures of the elections in the kingdom of Saxony. This division of the German Empire is entitled to 23 representatives in the Reichstag. In 1903 the Socialists won 18 of these seats with absolute majorities; they were engaged in the second ballots in the remaining five constituencies; they won four (all those in which they were at the head of the poll at the first ballots) and only lost the one constituency in which they were second on the poll. The Social Democrats, who at the first ballots polled 58·8 per cent. of the votes, thus obtained 22 seats out of 23, and the second ballots in this case only confirmed the overwhelming preponderance which the system of

single member constituencies had conferred upon the larger party.

It would, indeed, seem that a system of second ballots rather accentuates those great changes in representation which are the normal characteristic of a system of single member constituencies. In the elections in Saxony, in 1907, the Social Democrats were still by far the largest party, obtaining 48·5 per cent. of the votes. They succeeded in obtaining eight seats by absolute majorities and were engaged at the second ballots in eight other constituencies. They lost every one of these constituencies although at the first ballots they had been at the head of the poll in five of them. The unfavourable swing of the pendulum reduced their representation at the first ballots, and the second ballots merely increased their misfortunes.

Nor would redistribution have lessened the violence of these changes in the constituencies in which second ballots were necessary. Thus, for example, Frankfort-on-Main, with an electorate of 77,164, should return two members instead of one. The constituency was won by the Socialists in the second ballots of 1903, but was lost at the second ballots in 1907. In both years the Socialist candidate was at the head of the poll at the first ballots. Similarly, the constituency of Elberfeld-Barmen, with an electorate of 67,241, won by an absolute majority in 1903, was lost by the Socialists at the second ballots in 1907, although their candidate had been at the head of the poll at the first ballot. If these and other constituencies had received additional representatives the violence of the changes in the composition of the legislative body would in all probability have been increased.

The Second Ballot and the Representation of Minorities.

A study of the statistics of the German General Elections shows that the representation obtained by the various parties depends very largely upon their supremacy in certain localities. In these districts the minorities have been unrepresented for many years, the second ballots having in no way saved them from practical disfranchisement. Thus, the Centre Party is in the ascendant in the Rhenish Provinces. In the districts of Cologne, Münster, Aix-la-Chapelle, the Centre Party monopolises the representation, returning every one of the 15 members to which the districts are entitled. In the adjoining districts of Düsseldorf, Coblenz and Trèves they return 16 out of 24. In Bavaria the districts of Lower Bavaria, Oberpfalz, Unterfranken and Schwabia, which are entitled to 23 members, are represented wholly by members of the Centre Party. Taking the kingdom of Bavaria as a whole, the Centre Party obtained 34 seats out of 48, although they polled only 44·7 per cent. of the votes at the first ballots. There are therefore reproduced in Germany the conditions which obtain in certain parts of the United Kingdom—the permanent supremacy of one party which monopolises, or nearly so, the representation of the district.

Conclusion.

The system of second ballots has therefore had a considerable influence in creating that divergence between the votes polled and seats obtained which has characterised German elections.

The representation of any one party depends, to a very large degree, upon the attitude taken towards it by other parties. The system in no way acts as a corrective to the anomalies arising from single member constituencies and may even accentuate the violent changes associated with them. Moreover, the system does not provide representation for minorities, and therefore does not ensure a fully representative character to popularly elected legislative bodies.

FOURTH DAY.

Monday, 26th April 1909.

MEMBERS PRESENT :

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

The Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.
The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

The Right Hon. LORD BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH, K.T., called and examined.

504. (*Chairman*.) You are a member of the Proportional Representation Society's Committee?—I am.

505. You have taken a considerable part in electioneering matters in the course of your public life, and taken great interest in them?—I do not know about electioneering matters; I have never had an opportunity of standing for the House of Commons. I have an election for my representative peerage for every Parliament, but it does not involve proportional representation, though it might not be a bad thing to apply it to that.

506. Do you consider that the present system does not quite adequately fulfil the main objects which all representative institutions ought to possess?—I do not consider it does; because I think that what we ought to aim at is to make the representative body as nearly as possible a reflex of the opinion of the constituencies. The present system does not do that, and I think it is almost within the knowledge and experience of everybody that it is increasingly not doing it. For instance, in the election of 1900 there was a much larger Conservative and Unionist majority than the number of votes cast would have justified; and beyond all question, in the last election the swing of the pendulum, as it is called, was, from various causes, so violent as to turn the balance unfairly in the opposite direction.

507. Do you consider that the present system is not representative of all shades of opinion?—I hold that view very strongly.

508. You say the difficulty of securing that is no new one. You think it is an increasing difficulty?—Yes, I do, and for this reason, that organisation is obviously necessary in all democratic forms of government to get voters to the poll. But organisations tend to fall into the hands and under the management of the extremer men on each side, with the result that the moderate man, who is called the balancing elector sometimes, very seldom finds that he has a candidate exactly to his liking; he is forced to take an extreme man on one side or the other, and the only remedy which he has is to be like the traditional Irishman, always against the Government, which makes the swing of the pendulum more violent than it need be; and I venture to suggest that that is bad for the country, because it strikes at the stability and continuity of policy.

509. In other words, the majorities now obtained are far in excess of what the true proportion ought to be?—I think they are too liable to be so.

510. This matter was discussed during the last Redistribution Bill in 1884 and 1885?—Yes.

511. The result of those deliberations was the formation of single-member constituencies?—That is so; the three-cornered constituencies, as they were used to be called, being largely discredited; they were not very many in number, and they were not, I think, very successful.

512. Your opinion is that three-member constituencies did not fulfil the purpose for which they were created?—Not according to the conditions under which they were created, and in practice.

513. But it is a fact that in a certain number the third member was a member of the minority?—In some cases that was so, and if that was always likely to be the result, I confess I should, in theory, think it a better system than the present one.

514. But it was generally conceded on all sides that it was not a desirable thing to continue or extend?—I understood so as regards that particular method.

515. The present system, you think, does not give a fair representation, and tends to destroy independence in Parliament?—The idea that underlay the present system was that the majority in one single-member constituency would be neutralised or compensated for by the majority in the others. But it was not foreseen that there might be, as there sometimes has been in a district, a large number of small majorities carrying so many different seats, and then, in one district perhaps, without saying that the constituency had been gerrymandered or specially arranged, in a county or borough in which there has been an overwhelming majority on the other side, a greater majority in total than the sum of the majorities got by the successful candidates in the other three or four divisions.

516. In practice, in regard to the present system, do not you think it gives a certain number of representatives to all sections?—It gives a certain number in many cases. Later on I was going to instance Wales, but in answer to your question, I might point out that the Conservatives and Unionists of Wales are at this moment absolutely without a representative in the House of Commons. Although in 1906 in the contested elections, which I think were 19, the Radical votes polled 85,744, the Conservatives polled 53,148, and I think if 85,000, practically 86,000, get the whole of the representation, it cannot be said that the minority are fairly treated.

517. That is taking one part of the country separately; but taking the whole country, you will admit that Welsh Conservatives have a certain number of representatives who agree with the main outlines of their policy?—No doubt; but in these days of nationalities, when Wales is setting up to be a nationality of its own, it can hardly ever be said that the 53,000 Unionists in Wales are fairly treated in not having a single Welshman representing their opinions.

518. But taking the minority in the House of Commons, it practically does embrace nearly all sections of those who are opposed to the Government of the day?—Yes.

519. Incidentally possibly in one or two cases only one or two representatives?—I am very anxious not to be thought to be discussing party politics, and what I say I hope will be taken in a really uncontroversial sense; but I think I should say, that on both sides of the House of Commons representation is in the hands of the extremer men of each party. One always feels the thing perhaps personally rather keenly, but at this particular moment it is perfectly obvious to anybody that a person who, like my humble self, is a Unionist Free Trader, has not a very hopeful chance of having a due representation in the House of Commons.

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520. You think that is a permanent condition of the present system, and does not merely happen to be the case at the present moment?—I think it is an essential accident of the present position; and what I am apprehensive of is that it will increase and grow worse, the more the parties are breaking up. Supposing there are differences between Liberal and Radical, or Labour and Socialist, the more candidatures there are the less likely under the single member system, without something to correct it, is the result to be in accordance with what I put forward as an ideal—to make the representative body a reflex of the opinion of the constituencies.

521. Of the various schemes that have been proposed from time to time to cause minorities to have some representation, do you consider the single transferable vote system to be the most applicable?—That is my opinion.

522. Have you compared this with other schemes, such as the Belgian list system?—I do not want to express a dogmatic opinion upon things of which I am not sure, but if I understand it rightly, that system is one in which various organisations put forward definite lists of candidates, and you must take the whole of one or the whole of the other. That would seem to me to have nearly all the vices of the present system without any of its advantages. It certainly would not tend to give the freedom of choice to the individual elector which I venture to suggest the single transferable vote system gives.

523. Or the second ballot system?—I do not like the idea myself of a second ballot because I do not think the experience of France, so far as I can read and understand the French papers, is satisfactory. As I understand, the effect of the second ballot is to make the man ultimately elected feel that he is not necessarily the representative of the majority. He knows that he is not the real representative of the majority, and he knows that one section of the people who voted for another candidate has been practically coerced into dividing their votes between him and another man, and he has to consider that fact in all his public actions—he, perhaps, must do it. It has its good and bad features. He has to consider how to placate that party, so as not to lose his seat. It would tend, I think, to want of independence and want of stability. I do not know whether I may add one other reason why I am in favour of the single transferable vote system. It is for this reason, and I think it is a very important one; that it gives more play to what I venture to describe as local patriotism. I dislike, and always have disliked, the breaking up of historical divisions of the country into single member constituencies with more or less fictitious boundaries. Taking Glasgow or Edinburgh, some of the larger counties or English cities, such as Liverpool, Manchester, or Bristol, a man who is member for, relatively speaking, a small number of wards in one of those places, is apt to feel that he is only a representative of that particular little part of the community. If he was one of six or seven members for a large city—say Manchester or Liverpool—he would get a considerable access of dignity; because, after all, he does to a certain extent represent all parts of that historical division. I think it would be of enormous advantage not to split up these places, which are really the centre of local patriotic feeling. If I may go one step further, it seems to me that the great problem of the future will not be the extension of the franchise, but will be redistribution, so as to approach more nearly to what is described in modern parlance “one vote one value.” One of the crying evils of the present system is the extraordinary divergence in size of the present constituencies. A system of equal electoral districts would render itself liable to gerrymandering; it would almost constantly have to be altered. There would be no time for local patriotism to grow up; whereas if you could keep the great units of the country in one you would simply have in a Redistribution Bill to alter the number they return, and not alter the boundaries.

524. Do you agree that under the present system it is easier for the member to be acquainted with the particular locality he represents than he would be if he

were merely one of five or six members for a large area?—I should agree; but I think that brings its disadvantages, because it narrows his outlook. If a man is a representative of only the residential west-end district of Edinburgh, say, and not of the labour part of it, he has a narrower outlook; and if he only represents the labour part he has a narrower outlook, on the other side; and, therefore, it is a case of violent contest between perhaps two parts of one city and county.

525. You attach no value to the connection which exists between a member and his constituents at the present moment?—I should be sorry to say that I attach no value to it, because I have never been in the position of such a representative, and it would be improper for me to express an opinion; but I will put it in this way: I attach greater value to the patriotism for the one historical area than for a small section of it.

526. Under the present system the member is expected to be closely acquainted with all sections and all interests in his constituency. Do not you think the enlargement of the constituency would increase the labour which would be expected from a member?—If you go too far it would. If you make the whole of London one division under the transferable vote system, it would be so; but it seems to be a question of degree.

527. A member now has considerable difficulty in going through his constituency, even in the course of two or three years. If he were made a member for a large county or part of a county, it would practically be impossible for him to keep himself in touch with it all?—That again is, of course, a special difficulty with which I am not familiar, and those who are must give due weight to it. I think I should be inclined to suggest that some of the demands made upon the time of members of the House of Commons in visiting their constituencies are unreasonable. One friend of mine told me it took him six weeks every year, by a meeting every night, to make acquaintance with his county division; and I think if he had less of that it would be better for him.

528. There is only one other system I should like to ask your opinion upon, and that is the cumulative vote?—Personally I dislike the cumulative vote extremely.

529. The only place where it remains is in Scotland?—So I understand; and I do not think it remains there with the good will of the mass of the people. I think if there had been time in the last Session of Parliament, a very large proportion of the Scottish members would have been willing to see something else substituted for it. I need not go into that, because probably everybody here knows what took place. I did, just out of curiosity, preserve the newspaper records of the results of the School Board Elections in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee this year. They are very instructive. In Edinburgh the highest member on the poll got 49,721 votes; the last elected man got 17,234, which is about one-third. The next candidate who was not successful was only 3,000 behind. The successful candidates ranged from 49,721 votes down to 17,234. No one can say that that was a fair representation of the feelings of the constituency. Glasgow is almost more ridiculous; because the highest successful candidate there got 81,109 votes, and the lowest successful one 18,619; whereas the highest unsuccessful candidate got 18,534, or was within 100 votes of the lowest successful candidate. So if you look at the difference between the highest successful candidate of 81,000, and the lowest successful candidate of 18,000, and then there came four people above 12,000, does not it show what a ridiculous system it is for giving the opinion of a constituency? In Dundee, Lord Locher will probably know, but it strikes me there must have been an extraordinarily small poll. I do not know the number of those who went to the poll, but the highest successful candidate got 16,554 votes; the lowest successful candidate 7,291, and the highest unsuccessful candidate 6,497—about 800 behind. That again illustrates the sort of thing, though not in quite such a marked degree. If the Commission wish it, I will hand in these three newspaper extracts, which give certain particulars and comments; it might be convenient for the Commission to have the actual figures as they are here, for study.

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530. (*Lord Lochee.*) How many votes would each member have in Dundee?—The number of successful candidates is 17. Everybody has one vote for each candidate to be elected, and can divide them as he likes, or give all to one person.

531. Then I think that must have been a very small poll?—That is my belief.

532. (*Chairman.*) Could you tell us if it had the desired result of allowing the smaller sections to obtain representation?—That is a little difficult for an outsider to say, because they are not described in any case, except in Edinburgh, where there was rather a hot fight on a particular matter which I will mention in a moment. They are described as "Independent," "Citizen," "Church of Scotland," then a lady candidate, "Church of Scotland," "Independent," "Roman Catholic," "Citizen," "Episcopalian," "Citizen," "Church of Scotland," "Independent," "Independent," and so on. I am not quite sure that I understand exactly what is meant by "Citizen," but, unfortunately for the first time in my experience, there was the commencement, or at least an indication, of a religious difficulty in the election. There have always been contests between the churches—less so perhaps in the last few years—but, owing to something turning on a question of giving school books out of public funds to the voluntary schools, a feeling of this sort arose; and this, no one thinks more than I do, is a matter for great regret. Undoubtedly I think the abolition of the cumulative vote would be held by the Episcopalians and Roman Catholics in Scotland to be against their interests; that is if we substitute for it single member constituencies, I think then they would be in an unfair position, because I do not think they would get many members. However, I do not think they would be prejudiced, and I think they could be convinced of it if there was transferable voting, because then I think minorities would get their chance. Anything, in my opinion, which would prevent people standing for a school board as representatives of particular churches would be very much welcomed generally in Scotland, although Lord Lochee knows as well as I do that we do not have much religious difficulty there.

533. You think the cumulative vote is not a thing which is considered of great advantage to Scotland?—I think you may take it from me that it is practically discredited, but that in any change of it regard must be had to the due interests of the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian minority. I think it is right they should be represented on the School Board, even although in both of those communities they have in very many cases schools of their own.

534. In this country it was abolished by more or less general consent, was it not?—I understand so.

535. In this scheme of the single transferable vote, you do not anticipate any danger of creating groups of parties, somewhat similar to what now obtains in France?—We are now on a question of theory, and I do not know that my opinion is very much worth having upon it; but I think it must be obvious to everybody that groups are creating themselves now. There is more indication of grouping in both parties—certainly in the dominant party—at the moment than there ever was before.

536. You do not think that this proposed system would encourage that?—I should have thought not. I should have thought it would tend to minimise differences rather than to accentuate them.

537. What I wish to get at is this. Under the present system, Parliament has not merely functions as a representative body, but it also has functions as an executive body?—Certainly. Both executive and legislative.

538. Therefore it is necessary that there should be a decided working majority to carry on the Executive?—I should entirely agree; but I might say that too large a majority is not always a source of strength.

539. Supposing it had to be one of two evils, too large or too small, surely the too large is better than the too small?—I am not sure. I think I would rather have a moderate majority on one side or the other; neither side is then tempted to press their own view too far. I am speaking, in that case, of the

executive side. No doubt a large majority is important if you are going to make any great constitutional change; but that leads me to say that one of the features that disquiet me at the moment is this argument for what is called a mandate. I believe it to be one of the most unconstitutional ideas, according to our traditions, that ever was started, because it ought to be the glory of our House of Commons that it should be representative and not delegate.

540. You mean, that the Government of the day becomes more or less an irresponsible body, and relies on its party majority to carry through measures which actual representatives might not approve of?—Your Lordship will lead me into controversy if I begin about the closure of the House of Commons.

541. You do not anticipate that this proportional scheme would reduce a majority to an absolute unworkable proportion?—I do not think so, unless the country were equally divided; in which case, if the country is equally divided, I think Parliament ought to be.

542. From the numbers of the last few general elections, it appears the sides are more or less equal?—Yes. It is really a little difficult to argue from two or three cases, I fully admit; because there are local circumstances. People who disliked the 1900 majority said it was "Khaki"; and those who disliked the 1906 majority said it was "Chinese slavery." There is always something to be said to discount it. But I venture to say, if you look at the general elections for the last quarter of a century and try and find a fair line through them, I do not think it is possible to conceal from one's self that the dominant question of the moment has a rather unfair effect upon the Parliament of the next five years. Perhaps, to complete it, I should add that I think the transferable vote would be one means of remedying that, or would tend to remedy it. I have put down some further detailed figures about Wales and Scotland, but I gather that those points are fully before the Commission, and I need not labour them.

543. Taking Scotland, do you think that this system would enable the Scottish representatives more truly to reflect the opinion of the country?—Yes. I think it would avoid our breaking up counties. There are two or three instances of counties being united in Scotland. They are not always very satisfactory even as they are; and even the united constituencies are small. I think it would be very much better, if you must unite the counties, to have, if they are small counties, two or three together with several votes, and not break up larger counties into divisions. For instance, I had occasion the other day to have the strength of the agricultural vote for Scotland analysed. One would say that Scotland was in large part an agricultural country, but I had carefully taken out for another purpose the strength of the agricultural vote in every county constituency in Scotland. The farmer, labourer and landlord were put on one side, and other interests on the other, taking it as agricultural pure and simple. I think it is worth while in this context saying that there were only two constituencies, Forfarshire and Dumfries, in which the agricultural vote was in a majority. In every other case the agriculturist would, on a poll, be outvoted. I think it would be much better that in places like Ayrshire, Midlothian, Berwickshire, and Kirkcubrightshire, which have large agricultural interests, there should be the transferable vote system, so that the agriculturists could get one man to represent them. At the present moment almost in every constituency the agricultural vote is overbalanced by the small townsman, the villa resident or the miner.

544. That would necessitate grouping several counties together, in many instances?—Not always; because in the larger populous counties they could stand very well by themselves with three or four members, instead of being split up into three or four divisions.

545. That brings us to the question of a minimum of members for any particular constituency. What do you consider ought to be the minimum?—Obviously you cannot go below three.

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546. Three is the minimum?—Obviously; but I like five or seven better.

547. Seven as a maximum, or would you go even further than that?—I would not like to fix a hard and fast line, because I want to get at the local patriotism. One does not know the numbers off-hand of Leeds, Bristol, or Manchester (Edinburgh is four and Glasgow is seven), but I would prefer to keep a big community like that together within reasonable limits. I suggest that as a question of degree rather than one of principle.

548. You would keep a community like Glasgow or Edinburgh separate?—Certainly.

549. In the small counties you do not think the idea of grouping one or two together would be very distasteful to the inhabitants?—I think you must do it. I happen to come from the smallest county, although not the least populous, and we are grouped with another—Clackmannan and Kinross—but we are so small that, if there was anything like one vote one value, there would have to be some change; we could not stand alone. It would be better if we possibly could. I, personally, would rather have all the burghs which are within the district thrown into one and a proportional vote, than have the burghs taken out and the counties practically disfranchised or added to a much larger one like Fife or Stirling. I am speaking so much of local things that perhaps it may not convey my full meaning.

550. I understand that you think the larger the constituency the more truly representative the members would be?—I think so.

551. You do not think, in large constituencies, it puts a great deal of power into the hands of the party caucus?—I should say infinitely less power if you have a transferable vote than if you simply have the one man selected by the organisation—I do not call it a caucus—and the electorate only gets a choice of two men.

552. But in old days, when the cumulative vote was in force in this country, the practice was for the organisers to draw up a list which the majority of the electors simply voted for?—But it takes a great deal of organisation and a great deal of instruction to a voter how he is to vote, and I do not think it would be possible to organise a complete list under a cumulative vote.

553. You think the difficulties of perfecting such an organisation would be so great that it would not be even attempted?—I do not think anyone proposed a cumulative vote for Parliament.

554. But under the transferable vote?—I do not quite follow.

555. It is possible for the party organisers to instruct their supporters to vote for a certain number of candidates?—Yes, but when the voter gets to the ballot-box he may obey the instructions or not, as he likes.

556. But the tendency is to vote according to the party ticket?—I have very seldom been in the position of a voter, but I think for myself, as a rule. I have voted for some local bodies in London and other places.

557. That difficulty was felt under the cumulative vote system when there were a number of candidates and a number of votes?—I do not say a word in praise of the cumulative vote.

558. You do not think there is any danger under the transferable vote of the same thing occurring?—I should say not.

559. There is one difficulty in connection with this transferable vote system, and that is the subject of bye-elections. Have you any suggestion as to how that difficulty could be overcome?—I suppose you cannot avoid the majority telling in that case. I should rely upon one of two things: either we would have to stand the accident of the majority getting the representation for the rest of the Parliament; or we would have to trust, as I think you might in some cases under a new system, to the common sense and fairness of the people concerned, that they would in many cases, when feeling did not run very high, try to substitute a man something like the last one. One does not know.

560. You would not be in favour of any system of co-option?—No, not for Parliament.

561. Not five members filling a sixth vacancy?—I think a good deal of water will run under the bridges before we get Parliament to agree to that.

562. As to the actual carrying out of this system of transferable votes, do you anticipate any practical difficulties?—I do not. I have been present at two or three public meetings when we have had the thing tried upon a chance audience. A board behind the platform had on it the names of 15 or 20 well known men, and then the audience were given papers and asked to vote. It was done extremely simply. I admit in that case they were presumably a more or less middle-class and intelligent audience; but personally I have such confidence in my fellow countrymen that I think they would learn the really simple things they would have to learn very quickly.

563. I have in mind more the matter of counting the votes afterwards?—In one case we had a constituency of 500 at a meeting, and the result was announced within 20 minutes or half an hour. If you had to wait for a day for it, surely it is worth while to do that rather than have a bad result for five years.

564. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) We were told at the last sitting that the only country in which the system of transferable votes is actually in force is Tasmania. That seems to be the only country which supplies any practical experience of the method. Is not that one of our great difficulties in dealing with the subject?—It is a reason for caution, certainly. Your informant probably would not have said that unless it had been the case; but I have been under the impression that the new Constitution in South Africa provided for proportional representation. I thought South Australia and Oregon and other English speaking countries had also something analogous to it.

565. Not quite the same system, I think; and the South African Constitution is not yet in force. The South African Constitution proposes, I understand, constituencies with three or more members, but that is not in force yet?—No one would be bold enough to say that the Parliament of this country should make a leap in the dark and go for it all at once; but I should have thought it would have been a wise thing to try it in municipal elections or in the Scottish School Board elections, as the cumulative vote is generally discredited and will have to be changed. There has just been a School Board election in Scotland, and within the next two or three years I think it is practically certain the cumulative vote system must be changed. I am not fond of suggesting that Scotland should be the *corpus vile*, but I think in this case we would welcome it.

566. That leads us to a question which is outside the scope of our Inquiry. On the other hand we cannot avoid your evidence on the School Board elections, which is extremely valuable, because it throws light on Parliamentary elections. But strictly speaking we are confined to the question of Parliamentary elections. You speak of the School Board elections. May it not be said that the argument for the transferable vote is stronger in the case of local government elections than in the case of Parliamentary elections, for this reason: the local governing body is an administrative body; Parliament is not an administrative body. In the case of a local governing body, what you have to look for, and in most cases where party conflict is not very keen, what you try to get, is the best administrator—the man who knows most about a particular subject or is most capable of dealing with it. But is that the motive which determines the voter in electing a member for Parliament? Is it not rather the question whether this or that Government shall administer the country, and does not that make a considerable difference?—Undoubtedly it is so to some extent, but I should answer by saying that the experience of the last quarter of a century has, with one exception, shown you that the Government in power does not appeal with success to the electorate, and that the combined effect of single member constituencies—acute organisation, and party loyalty—the system of closure under which the House of Commons is now obliged to do its business, all tend in two directions, both of which are,

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in my humble opinion, not good: first, much more acute division between the two sides of the House than there used to be; and then, less independence on the part of the individual, and too much power concentrated in the hands of the Government of the moment. Perhaps I shall be told I am pessimistic, but that is my view.

567. That illustrates the difficulty we are in; because the only country where we have had much valuable practical experience of the working of proportional representation is Belgium, and the Belgian system is different from that proposed by your society, and I understand you do not approve of it?—I should not like to be led into discussion of the Belgian system, because I do not know enough about it; but according to what I believe to be the case, it has certainly tended to minimise the friction between the two extremes even in Belgium. I understand in Belgium the Roman Catholic districts used to have all Roman Catholic representatives, and the Socialist districts and the extreme Radical districts were almost exclusively Radical. I am told, and of course it must be verified by someone who knows more than I do, that the result of the Belgian system has been to minimise those differences, and that there are now some representatives of Radical opinion in Roman Catholic districts. Surely, taking our own districts of Wales, it would tend to minimise conflict if there was some Welshman in the House of Commons who could speak for the Welsh minority.

568. I understand that has been the effect in Belgium. The difficulty in Belgium, I understand, was that religious differences rather than party differences were identified with geographical districts, and therefore, you had a particular geographical area Catholic, and another geographical area anti-Catholic. I think it is shown that the adoption of the transferable vote system in Belgium has diminished those evils; but we are also told that its effect has been to eliminate the independent member. That is one of the statements which were made by our representative in Belgium. Might not that be the result of adopting the transferable vote system in England, that is to say, would not the tendency be to vote according to the party ticket? We come back to that?—In that case I see no hope for the independent member, because I think he is disappearing rapidly in the House of Commons.

569. Our doubt is whether the transferable vote system would restore him or help him?—I should catch at almost any straw for the purpose of saving him.

570. What is suggested is that the average voter would vote for the party ticket; of course he would not be compelled to, but his tendency would be to vote for the party's list supplied to him by the party agent?—I am not sure that he would. I should say that, provided you get distinguished men of good record and high character put forward, the tendency of the average voter would be to pick out of those, after he had given his own preferences, the sort of man whose record appealed to him, and that there is a greater chance of undermining the power of the party Boss under that system than any other I have been able to hear of.

571. That may be so, but we have had no practical experience?—I am afraid you cannot get practical experience until you try the system.

572. I notice, in referring to the French system of a second ballot, that you mention as one of the objections to it—there are others—that the representative elected feels that he is not the representative of a majority; I suppose he is the representative of a coalition of minorities?—I should say so.

573. Might not that be the case under the transferable vote system?—It would be less easy to arrange, because the minorities would not know their relative strength until the vote had been taken.

574. Do not you think the agents would form a very fair guess?—I think the agents are not as wise in those matters as they think themselves.

575. We will come back to the party ticket?—That may be; but I point out that under the transferable vote system, if the voter votes the party ticket he does it voluntarily. Under the present system he has nothing to do but vote his own party ticket or the other party ticket; the latter of course he will not do,

and he sticks to his own party. If you put forward a list of people he can make his own choice, and you give him a freedom which I think he will get under no other system.

576. That is to say, you give him the opportunity of making a selection?—Yes.

577. But the question is whether he would practically avail himself of it, and that we cannot say?—That is his look out.

578. The effect, you think, would be to let in, for these large constituencies, representatives of minorities?—I should hope so.

579. Then the representative would feel himself in the same difficulty as the representative who is elected under the second ballot does in France; he would be the representative of the minority and not of the majority?—I think not; because, on another election, if he behaved himself and did well, he would have the same chance of support.

580. Would not that be the same case in France? If the member elected by a group of minorities got his seat and distinguished himself in the House he would have a better chance of re-election?—Yes. There is a danger in this country of, it may be, extreme temperance, or it may be extreme religious educationalism, or extreme people of either of these kinds banding themselves together to put pressure upon a member, saying, "We can command so many votes, and unless you do so-and-so you shall not have them."

581. The groups would work in that way?—I think they might under the second ballot.

582. Would not they under the transferable vote?—I cannot say they would not, but I still think that under the transferable vote the individual elector has a better chance of freedom.

583. Should you say that any set of views or principles or interests is unrepresented in the present House of Commons, or was unrepresented in the last House of Commons, that is to say, was any set excluded?—That is rather a large question. "Unrepresented" is a very strong term. I think I should be inclined to say that in the present House of Commons the Moderate Progressive—what I should venture to describe as the Left Centre politician—is under-represented.

584. You prefer the expression "under-represented" rather than "unrepresented"?—Certainly.

585. Then, in considering representation you can hardly count by numbers. A single able speaker would count for more than 20 mute members?—I do not know. The Division Lobby is very powerful. If you want me to carry on the Government I would rather have the votes than the speaker.

586. But in modifying and influencing opinion an able speaker would count?—But it is votes which are wanted in the House of Commons.

587. Has opinion no effect on votes?—I do not say that, but I think it has less now than it ought to have.

588. Can you say how far there is an effective demand for the transferable vote—say in Scotland?—It is difficult to say that. We are only preparing the way. This society, to which I have alluded, is a comparatively modern one, but it is making its way.

589. You think it is making its way?—I have no doubt of it.

590. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) You have not touched on another point of difficulty which we have, and that is, how to deal with split voting; that is where you have a Radical, a Unionist, a Socialist, and a Labour man contesting a single member constituency?—But I would get rid of the single member constituency.

591. Then you do not see any way of dealing with that form of difficulty except by redistribution?—No, by alteration. I think the single member constituency will be bad, especially where you have people on more than two party tickets before the constituency. We know quite well that in the present Parliament and at the last general election there were several times three-cornered fights, and on several occasions, at any rate, the gentleman returned was not the choice of the majority of those polling. I do not think any one can defend that as a good result.

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592. That is the class of case to which I desire to direct your attention?—Then I say in answer to that, that under the single member constituencies, and with regard to our present constitution, I do not think you can remedy it. I think whatever you do you will be in a logically indefensible position.

593. You feel that you cannot apply the transferable vote to a single member constituency?—I do not see how you can; because in a single member constituency if there are two candidates the majority of one more than the half wins. If you attempt to transfer the votes it seems to me to have all the evils of a second ballot without giving the elector the choice of what under the then circumstances he would do if he knew that there were only the two men.

594. Has it all the evils of the second ballot?—The election would take place in one and be finished in one, and there would not be the opportunities for intrigue, and so forth, which follow from a second election?—I have no practical experience. I think I would rather, if that is to be the case, give the voter a free choice of the issue. But I do not advocate it. I do not like the idea of the second ballot.

595. Then really, as a matter of fact, in order to bring into force a full system of transferable voting there must be general redistribution?—Certainly.

596. That cannot be avoided, in your judgment?—Certainly not; but I should rather see a reversion to the old historical divisions than what we shall have to come to if we continue our single member constituencies—a cutting up of the country with all its controversies about gerrymandering.

597. How far, in your judgment, is it necessary to carry that system of redistribution? Could it be done in part? Would you make an experiment in part; that is, would you take the cities first?—All I can say is that it is very well worth considering. You must not ask me in the witness box off hand to make a scheme until you accept the principle. It had not occurred to me, but I think it is a valuable suggestion.

598. It is a very large order to embark on a wholesale scheme of redistribution in order to try the experiment of the transferable vote, upon the practical evidence before the Commission?—I agree.

599. Would you make a beginning with the cities—that is the question?—It is very well worth considering.

600. Leaving the counties out for the time being?—I should like to see it tried, certainly.

601. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You stated that, provided we got distinguished able men to stand for these constituencies with the transferable vote in existence, certain evils anticipated by a member of the Commission would not be likely to come about. In your opinion would there be a better chance of getting distinguished and able candidates under the proposed system than under the present?—It can only be a matter of hope. My hope, I might almost say sanguine hope, is would be that it would be so. There is greater temptation to a big man in places like Manchester or Liverpool to stand as one of six or seven men for the whole representation, than to go down to a relatively speaking small section, and court the purely local phases of opinion.

602. The chance of getting better men, then, would be largely based on the fact that the constituencies would be larger?—I should hope so.

603. It is not so much a matter of the actual transferable vote as of the larger constituencies?—I agree; but I do not think you can—I may be perhaps rash in saying so—go back to the larger constituencies except under some system of transferable vote.

604. You stated that the question of the size of the constituencies was a matter of degree rather than of principle?—Certainly; if you keep to the one idea which I regard as of importance—local patriotism.

605. But is not the question of degree in this matter almost all-important—the question of the size of the constituencies? If your object is to get minorities represented, does not it almost entirely turn on the size of your constituencies?—Only between limits. You cannot go below three, and you must not go above a certain number—call it *x* for the moment—because of confusion. I think Mr. Hare or somebody put the idea

forward of having elections for the whole country. That seems to me ludicrous.

606. That was Mr. Hare's object; but the question of size is extremely important, you admit?—Yes.

607. The object is largely, if not altogether, to get intelligent minorities represented better than they are now?—That is one object and a considerable one; but I think it is also of importance from the aspect of endeavouring to save the House of Commons from being, as I think it is increasingly tending to be, divided into those who are violently opposed to one another.

608. To diminish extremes and friction?—In other words, I think they are tending to be more delegates of the extreme sections on both sides coupled with party loyalty, rather than having the sense of responsibility of individual representation.

609. But to stick to the point of the size of the constituencies for the moment, if the object is to get minorities better represented, your hope is based on the fact that an intelligent minority scattered about would be able to combine in those larger districts under the proportional representation system?—I do not think it would be so much a matter of combination as of giving the elector a free choice, which would tend to his giving his second or third vote to the distinguished man—I mean locally distinguished or locally big man.

610. But the distinguished man's friends would have to combine and work for him, scattered about as they would be?—No doubt.

611. To come to the point, is not it the case that the larger the constituency the better chance there would be of an intelligent minority having enough votes to return one man?—I think so.

612. Whereas the smaller the constituency the less chance?—I should agree at once, if you put it in that way.

613. Then would there be, in such a small constituency as three members, much chance of any considerable change—any appreciable change from the present position?—No, I think not; but if I may say so, with all respect, I did not advocate three. I ventured to say that you could not go below three. I put it possibly as a minimum; but I would rather have three in some cases if by that means I could keep to the sparsely populated local patriotic area.

614. That is very important. Then comes the question of a man being a representative or a delegate, on which you laid some stress. Let us suppose an intelligent but scattered minority combines and returns an able man. Surely he, as the representative of their views, the man picked to represent their special views, will be bound to them by very close ties indeed?—Yes, but they will be very honourable ties.

615. But there is such a thing as an honourable delegate?—Yes, that is almost saying that he is representative.

616. I may not be expressing myself clearly, but the point I am putting is, that under this proposed system it seems to me the influence of the electors over representatives in Parliament would possibly be even greater. The influence of the party machine may be less, but the influence of the actual local men who vote for a candidate would probably be greater, would it not?—I am prepared to run the risk.

617. Then with regard to the question of a second ballot, to which I gather you are opposed, Sir Francis Hopwood referred to the fact of there being a great difference between the use of a contingent vote, which would, in a single member constituency, settle the whole thing in one day at any rate, and a second ballot. Surely one of the great nuisances of the second ballot would be the lengthening of the election time and having a second election day?—I am not an expert, and I would not venture to put my own humble views strongly against that as so stated. If you are going to keep your single member constituencies, and have all the elections on one day, it possibly might be an advantage, but I hope nothing I say will be taken as representing me in favour of the continuance of the single member constituency, or of the second ballot as a means of trying to get rid of the present difficulty.

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[Continued.]

618. To quote an example, there has lately been a by-election in New Zealand, where they have the second ballot. There were five or six candidates for a single seat, three supporters of the Government, two supporters of the Opposition, and one Independent. The result of the first ballot was that two Government supporters came out first and second. The result of the second ballot, a week afterwards, after a week's further turmoil, expense, trouble and so on, was that the same two men came out first and second, almost at precisely the same distance from one another on the poll as they had been before. Surely the fact of having all the labour, trouble and expense is a great nuisance?—I frankly admit that when I said what I did about the second ballot, I had in mind a second ballot with originally only three candidates. I say at once frankly, that if there were four or five candidates, probably the transferable vote instead of the second ballot would be the best way out of it.

619. On the question of diminishing racial or religious friction by giving a minority a chance of representation, taking the case of Wales and Ireland, two very important examples, and admitting for the sake of argument, that it is desirable that the Unionists in Wales and the Protestants in Ireland should be fairly represented, would not it be necessary to have decidedly large districts to give a fair chance of it?—If you go for getting Protestants in in the west and south-west of Ireland, that would be most undoubtedly so; but because we cannot do everything, I suggest is not a good reason for doing nothing.

620. But even in the case of Wales you would want constituencies of very considerable size, would you not?—My local experience of Wales is not sufficient to tell me, but when I find that in Wales, under the present system, 53,000 people get no representation and 85,000 get 19 representatives, it seems to me a clamant case for doing something.

621. You referred to the desirability of giving the agricultural vote in Scotland a fairer chance, and you referred to the fact of the really small number of votes commanded by the landlords, farmers, and agricultural labourers. But surely in a case of very powerful interests like the agricultural interests it is not merely the actual votes of the persons directly engaged in an industry, but their local influence on others, which is very great?—Yes, but the difficulty arises from the fact that the dominant section are those who are easily organised and they are the dwellers in the small towns and burghs, and they have not, as a matter of fact, chosen those representatives at the moment who are interested in agriculture. It is a little difficult for me to go further on that point, because I should seem to be attacking individuals. I say quite frankly that the reason I got out this information was that, when we had a certain controversy a year or two ago, about the Land Holding Bill, we were told that the agricultural opinion in Scotland was against the view which I took, being against the Government Bill. I had the thing most carefully and fairly analysed, and it is the fact that if you were to take agriculturists against the rest in Scotland, there are only two constituencies in which the agriculturist is in a majority.

622. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) You attach great importance to the local character of a constituency—the local patriotism?—Yes.

623. You think that Mr. Hare's scheme is quite absurd?—So far as I have understood it. I have not gone very deeply into it; but if this we are advocating, the transferable vote for moderate sized constituencies, be regarded as revolutionary, it is quite clear Mr. Hare's scheme would never get a moment's consideration.

624. You would fix the constituency at five or seven, and would not like it to go beyond that. You would not regard that as a stepping-stone to something different?—No, I dislike this thin-end-of-the-wedge argument very much.

625. I ask that because I have seen it advocated, as I have seen the transferable vote pressed, on the ground that it leads up to something approximating to Mr. Hare's system. That would not be your view?—Not in the slightest, and for the very reason that Parliament is a legislative and not an administrative

body. That would, in my humble opinion, be a sound argument against Mr. Hare's scheme.

626. You think the local spirit and sentiment are very important?—I think them the most important thing of all.

627. I see one difficulty about your suggestion. In the cases that you have taken of local spirit, the towns you have mentioned are all towns of about seven, eight, or nine members. How do you allow for the small town that is swamped? In that case you must extinguish the local patriotism?—I would put them much more largely into the county divisions with the transferable vote.

628. But by so doing I suppose you must extinguish the local feeling as far as that small town goes?—Yes. I should avoid it where I could. I do not like the idea of grouping towns as apart from other districts; because, after all, when you come to think of it, the smaller town and the interest of the locality round about are generally wrapped up together.

629. I am not sure I should agree?—I should be sorry if I made too strong a statement. I am pretty confident it is so in Scotland. I do not speak beyond that.

630. As far as the argument is worth anything, the small town is merged in a larger area, and must be so merged?—Yes, I think so.

631. Then, take the county: I suppose you would have about the same number for the county—from four to six or seven members for a county constituency?—Yes, or you might have a division of a county—half a county.

632. At present it takes a man all his time to work a division of a county. It often means 100 meetings a year in a single division of a county?—Yes.

633. So with these very large counties he could not possibly go all round and speak in all the villages?—I agree; but in the old days it used to be the custom to canvass every elector; it is now found not to be worth while, and it is not done. I think it would make its own remedy.

634. I think it would, but would it not lead up to this, that a party highly organised would map out the county into areas, and each member would seize upon and nurse a certain area of the county. My point is that you would increase the power of organisation by that, because no independent man could work the whole of the division which you contemplate?—There is that criticism, of course.

635. One more question about the extremist and moderate member. I do not quite see the connection between our present electoral system and the extremist. I agree that the extremist is a feature of the present time, but I do not quite see how he arises by reason of our present electoral system?—I think it arises in this way, that the choice of the candidate is in the hands of the organisation. Those who work the organisation are the keen and usually the extremer men. The moderate men do not go much into it. Surely, if it is obvious that that is so, they are likely to, and I think do, choose a man of their own extreme views. I think the matter is so long past that I shall not raise controversy even with my friend Lord Lochee, if I say that it was notably instanced by what happened a quarter of a century ago in Scotland. At that time Disestablishment was a very considerable feature of the elections, and every Liberal or Radical member for Scotland, with one or two exceptions, almost without exception, was pledged to Disestablishment.

636. (*Lord Lochee.*) I was not?—As Lord Lochee knows, I was at that time in charge of the organisation of the Church for its defence, and we had petitions, and very carefully went into the matter to find out what the opinions were. Now there are districts of Scotland—north and east of Scotland—in which at that time there had seldom been Conservative (there were no Liberal Unionists in those days) members returned since the Reform Bill. We canvassed the electors with the greatest possible care, with a desire honestly to find out what was their opinion on the one question of Disestablishment taken by itself. I am speaking from recollection, but I think I am right in saying that there was no constituency in which the number of voters as

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[Continued.]

evidenced by petitions (and we had petitions in many cases from 65 to 75 per cent. of the total voters against) in favour of Disestablishment was more than between 15 and 30 per cent. Yet in almost every case the vote of the representative in the House of Commons was given for abstract resolutions in favour of Disestablishment—Lord Lochee says he was not—the reason being that the people who chose the candidate made it a point that he was to be a disestablisher. Coming to more recent times, it looks as though that party to which I belong was going to be, by some similar process, pledged in favour of Tariff Reform. In other words, a majority of a majority is not necessarily the majority of the whole. That is the point I want to make.

637. How do you think that the party system is less strong under the single transferable vote? I should have thought the party manager would still choose the candidates. He has got to please his party and he must choose an acceptable list?—I admit it to be a matter of conjecture—I admit that frankly; but my profound belief is that, having given his one or two first and second preferences in favour of the party ticket, the voter will think it less disloyal to his party to favour his own predilections for the man that he likes.

638. He would not vote the whole party ticket, you mean?—That is my belief.

639. He would vote for the first two or three, and then after that he would branch off into his own choice?—I hope so.

640. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) And he would vary the order of the party ticket?—That may be.

641. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) About your point with regard to local patriotism, you attach a great deal of importance to that?—Yes.

642. If you had a very large constituency which, as Mr. Hills has suggested to you, the member could not visit every part of at frequent intervals, the man you call the locally distinguished man would have the better chance among the candidates?—Undoubtedly, if you make the constituency very large.

643. If you had a county constituency returning seven members, do not you think it would be the case there that the man most likely to be a successful candidate would be what is known as the local candidate—the county councillor, and so on?—It would not overwhelm the party in Imperial politics altogether, I think.

644. It would not overwhelm the party?—I should think not.

645. Then when you came to a town, you were saying, I think, that it was far better you should have, let us say, a Labour member for the whole of Edinburgh than a Labour member for the labour part of Edinburgh?—I think probably he would be a man of wider outlook.

646. But he would be really appealing to the same section of the constituency?—Yes, but I do not think any partisan would be so partisan in appealing to the larger area as he would be if he were appealing to a smaller area of just that one interest.

647. Do you think the voter would be equally ready to come to the poll for a man whom he knew of, say, by reading about him, as he is now for a man whom he knows personally?—I think he would go to the poll when his feelings were moved. I doubt very much whether the majority of voters nowadays ever go to public meetings. I think a certain section go, and a considerable number stay away; but at a Parliamentary election they generally vote.

648. But do not you think that is due more to the activity of party organisation rather than to the question of the personality of the candidates themselves?—It is a matter of conjecture. I have never been a candidate for Parliament and I do not think my opinion is worth very much.

649. But as I understand, the chief motive in your advocacy of the single transferable vote is that you think it will aim a blow at the party system and party organisation as we know it now?—I do not say aim a blow—I do not want to destroy the party system; but

I think it will make it less inclined to be unduly acute, as I think it is at the present time.

650. It will diminish its rigidity?—I hope so. It is not the party system that I am against, but the excrescence on the party system, which I think is more and more putting the choice in the hands of the extreme section of each party.

651. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You think your system would give a better chance to the Left Centre, or the Centre man?—That is my idea. Take Birmingham—Birmingham is highly organised and the minority in Birmingham do not get a look in. I think it just as unfair that the whole Radical electorate round Birmingham should be disfranchised, as I do that the Conservative in Wales should be disfranchised. I want to put it quite anonymously in both cases.

652. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) In your memorandum you set out the figures of the strength of the poll of the different parties in the elections of 1885, 1892, 1895, 1900 and 1906, and contrast the results of the elections?—Yes.

653. A large amount of that disproportion might be cured by redistribution by equality of value and voting areas?—I think not, on two grounds: one of which is that with the single member constituencies, however you distribute them, there would be the risk of one large majority in one constituency overwhelming three or four small majorities in others.

654. It would not cure the whole of it but it would cure a certain proportion of it, would it not?—It might. But let me say that when you come to that, the task of the Boundary Commission that would have to do it would be one of almost superhuman difficulty. Lord Lochee knows quite well the many controversies we had about Scotch Reform Bills. At present in the west of Scotland there are county and borough constituencies, but some ingenious people once proposed to make a division of the Clyde Burghs. That would have been a certain Radical seat, but it would have given four or five county divisions equally certainly to the Conservatives. I hope to be understood that I put these things anonymously. Lord Lochee remembers the proposal.

655. (*Lord Lochee.*) I want to take you to the operation of the cumulative vote in Edinburgh. I have been looking at the figures you put in, and I find that in Edinburgh the Church of Scotland elected all their candidates, four in number; the Roman Catholics elected all their candidates, three in number; and the United Free Church, which had three candidates, failed to elect one of them?—Yes; I can explain that easily.

656. Is that a fair representation?—Certainly not fair; and I can tell you the reason for it. The "citizen" candidates were very largely drawn, I think, from those who would under some circumstances have voted differently on account of the appeal about free books—at least I think that is so.

657. They would probably include a good many United Free Kirkers?—I will not say United Free Church people, but those who might under other circumstances have sided with the United Free Church candidate.

658. It strikes me as remarkable that the United Free Church, which was very strong I understood in Edinburgh, failed to return a single candidate. Would not that be by party influence?—I do not know enough to say, but I think supporting the "citizen" candidate so called, knowing them as I do, is more likely to have drawn votes from those who would otherwise rather have voted for the United Free Church candidates than any other. They certainly could not have drawn them from Catholics or Episcopalians, and were still less likely to have drawn them from the Church of Scotland than from the United Free Church. I do not put it higher than that; though no doubt there are many people who could give a better analysis of it than I can.

659. Otherwise I do not see that these figures show a want of proportional representation as the result of the cumulative vote system?—I think the criticism upon those figures is the ludicrous nature of the result given.

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660. 49,000 is the number of votes at the head of the poll?—Surely no one can read down that list of figures without seeing that it is a ludicrous result of an election.

661. Ludicrous—yes; but is it disproportionate?—Quite disproportionate.

662. It is ludicrous in the sense that it puts an "Independent" a long way before a "citizen"—"Independent" 49,000 votes, and the lowest man only 17,000?—But the man there who had the largest number of individual votes was not necessarily at the head of the poll. Mr. Ramsay had 970 people who voted for him alone. Of course he must have organised and canvassed and got plumpers, but a man was above him on the poll who got only 389 plumpers. I think it is undesirable to have any system which puts such a premium upon that sort of result.

663. I agree; but the great objection, as I understand, in Scotland to the cumulative vote is the fact that it places at the head of the poll always a representative of a minority?—I should think that a bad result.

664. But the whole result may still have been consistent with proportionate representation. It was

The witness withdrew.

Mr. JOHN H. HUMPHREYS recalled.

668. (*Chairman.*) I believe you have a report you wish to put in?—Yes. I have just received a report from the chief electoral officer of Western Australia, which I will put in evidence. (*The document was handed in.*)

The witness withdrew.

FIFTH DAY.

Wednesday, 5th May 1909.

PRESENT :

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

The Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
LL.D., D.C.L.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*)

SENATOR COUNT GOBLET D'ALVIELLA called and examined.

MEMORANDUM handed in by the WITNESS.

Proportional Representation in Belgium.

The fight for Proportional Representation in Belgium lasted 35 years, from 1865 to 1900.

The first idea arose under the influence of Stuart Mill's political views. It then took hold among a few theorists who were laughed at as cranks, and when, in 1895, a Conservative member alluded to it in Parliament, he was nearly hooted down.

Belgium was then divided into electoral districts of unequal strength, returning each from one to thirteen members. Whenever the polling did not give an absolute majority a second and final ballot was held, but restricted to the candidates who had polled the highest figures. The result was that now and then the majority of seats were captured by a minority of the electorate (this was notably the case in 1870 at the expense of the Liberals, and in 1878 at the expense of the Catholics). Again in 1885 the Catholics, with 20,978 votes, captured 50 seats; and the Liberals, with 22,117, only two! In 1890 the Catholics received 48 per cent. of the total votes and won 56 per cent. of the seats.

The defeated party, of course, never failed to point out that it had been deprived of its legitimate share, and thus public opinion became accustomed to the idea of looking for a fairer method of distributing the seats. There grew, outside of party lines, the Belgian Asso-

ciation for Proportional Representation, which was immediately joined by men like M. Beernaert, Emile de Laveleye, Jules de Smedt, Victor d'Hondt, Jules Carlier, &c.

But the majority system was responsible for still further evils. As the population increased, some of the larger districts came to return as many as 15 and even 18 members (at the rate of one per 40,000 inhabitants). A change, therefore, in the votes of a few hundred electors at Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent could alter the parliamentary majority and upset the Government. Naturally no favour, no bribe, was spared to effect the change. M. Beernaert told Parliament that when the Catholics obtained in 1892 a majority of 34 members, this majority would have been turned into a minority if only 325 electors had reversed their votes.

Besides, little by little the political and the racial divisions began to coincide, the Liberals monopolizing the Walloon districts and the Catholics the Flemish, to the detriment of our national unity.

Yet, most of the politicians would not hear of the real remedy, some being afraid of plunging into the unknown, some of losing their seats.

It was only when a third party arose, after the franchise had been extended tenfold in 1892, that the majority system became intolerable. In most of the districts there was no longer an absolute majority, but three minorities, and, therefore, whether there were coalitions or not it was *always* the candidate of a

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[Continued.]

minority who was elected by the second ballot, the result lying in the hands of the smallest of the three groups, itself out of the field.

In the elections of 1894 few members were returned the first day, but, at the second ballot, wherever the list was headed by Catholics and Liberals, the Socialists voted for the Catholics, and wherever the contest remained between Catholics and Socialists, the Liberals did the same; which resulted in a formidable and quite disproportionate Catholic majority of 104 against 23 Socialists and 20 Liberals. Thus proportional representation came to be invoked, not only to secure the rights of the minorities, but still more those of the majority.

Things grew only worse during the following years. In 1900 Belgium was on the verge of a revolution. It was only avoided by the immediate and complete introduction of proportional representation into parliamentary elections.

All the doubts and objections, which had survived to the last, were dispelled at once. Everybody acknowledged that the result was *fair*. The Catholics were satisfied because they had returned a small majority; the Liberals, because they had increased their minority from 13 to 33; the Socialists, because they had opened a breach into some constituencies where they never had a footing before; the three parties, because they had succeeded in returning all their real leaders. It is quite true that "Independent members" have failed to get in; but it was exactly the same in Belgium under the majority system, and everybody will acknowledge that it is easier for an Independent candidate to obtain a simple *quota* than a full majority as before, for instance, at Brussels, 13,000 votes, instead of 140,000.

Since the first experiment of proportional representation, in 1900, public feeling as to the value of the reform has not changed, but new questions have arisen on three points which do not affect the principle nor the main application of the system.

1st. The Socialists, coming forward as a *class-party*, are of the opinion that proportional representation, based upon a system of plural voting, gives too much advantage to the middle and upper classes; but it is the system of plural voting that the Socialists want to get rid of.

2nd. The inequality of the electoral districts has revealed discrepancies which stand in the way of fair representation. For instance, Brussels has now 195,266 electors with 299,825 votes. On the other hand, there are some small districts, like Neufchateau-Virton, Hasselt, Ypres, Turnhout, &c., which count from 18,000 to 30,000 electors each, with 30,000 to 50,000 or 60,000 votes. The smaller the constituency the greater is the chance of leaving out some minorities. Now these small districts all belong to the rural part of Belgium, and thus the advanced parties are placed at a disadvantage.

3rd. There is a growing complaint that the Belgian system gives too much power to the party organisations, because it leaves with the supporters of each list the right to settle the order of precedence between the candidates. Of course the electors can upset this order and give the preference to any candidate on the list, but only if they are numerous enough to give him a number of votes equal to the quota or common divisor.

Without entering into details I may point out that this is not a necessary feature of the list system, nor even of the "double simultaneous vote." The single transferable vote is perfectly compatible with the list system, provided it is applied only to candidates on the same list.

On the other hand, the list system does not necessarily imply (even in Belgium) an official recognition of political parties. The candidates who agree to form a list together can take any appellation they choose. An individual candidate can also come forward and form a list by himself, provided he finds a hundred supporters (*parvins*).

The underlying idea is that every elector has a right (1) to choose between the lists (or the programmes) in the field; and (2) (if there are several names on the list which he has chosen) to give a preferential vote to one of its candidates, but only one. "*One man, one vote,*

one party, one candidate"—leaving out the complication of the Belgian plural vote—thus runs the formula. In fact, we use the transferable vote also, but, with us, the transfer is regulated by the candidates themselves, which, I repeat, is not a necessary feature of the scheme.

Let us take, for example, the names and figures of the model election organised lately by the English Proportional Representation Society. Had the four Liberal candidates (Asquith, Lloyd-George, Burt, and L. Jones) presented themselves on one list; had the five Unionists (Balfour, Long, Cecil, Smith, and Joynson-Hicks) done the same, and also the three Labour candidates (Macdonald, Henderson, and Shackleton), then according to the system of the "double simultaneous vote" the election would have been completed, after the 21,672 electors had given their first (and in this case their only) preferential vote. The result would have been as follows:—

<i>Liberals.</i>			
Asquith	-	-	9,042
Lloyd-George	-	-	2,751
Burt	-	-	260
Leif Jones	-	-	191
			12,244
<i>Unionists.</i>			
Balfour	-	-	4,478
Long	-	-	672
Cecil	-	-	460
Smith	-	-	164
Joynson-Hicks	-	-	94
			5,868
<i>Labour.</i>			
Macdonald	-	-	2,124
Henderson	-	-	1,038
Shackleton	-	-	398
			3,560

The division by the d'Hondt rule would yield the following figures:—

12,244 (i)	5,868 (iii)	3,560 (v)
6,122 (ii)	2,934	1,780
4,081 (iv)	1,956	1,186
3,061	1,467	890

The common divisor is the fifth number (there being five seats to be provided); 3,560. This secures at once the election of three Liberals, one Unionist and one Labour, and in each list, of the candidates who have polled the most votes, viz.: the same result as the final outcome of the operations so successfully conducted by the Proportional Representation Society on the basis of the single transferable vote. (*)

There are in Belgium representative bodies of three kinds. While proportional representation, as stated above, applies to both Houses of Parliament, the provincial councils are still elected by the old majority system (with a second ballot, if the first election gives no absolute majority), and the communal councils by a mixed system introduced in 1893. There is, in this last case, no second ballot. The candidates who obtain an absolute majority are elected at once. As to the others, the remaining seats are distributed between them proportionately in accordance with the d'Hondt rule. Another feature of the electoral law for communes, is that each elector has as many votes as there are seats, and that he can distribute them as he likes, even between candidates of different lists. This system is generally considered to be a failure; Liberals and Socialists denounce it as a party-measure, and even a strong section of Catholics demand its suppression in favour of the system applied to parliamentary elections.

As to the maintenance of the "majority" system in the provincial elections, it is doomed and would have

(*) Should Lord Hugh Cecil have stood alone as a Unionist Free Trader, it would have made no difference in the final result.

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[Continued.]

long ago disappeared if it was not for the difficulty of joining together the small *cantons* which now constitute the electoral districts. Meanwhile, it affords a living example of the abuses of the majority system and of the second ballot.

In the province of Limbourg, which elects 48 councillors, neither Liberals nor Socialists possess a single seat. In Flanders, if it was not for Ghent, they would not be much better off. On the other hand, in Brabant, where the Liberals do not count much more than a third of the electorate, they are in the council in an absolute majority; 53 against 28 Catholics and 12 Socialists. In 1898, in Ghent, the Liberals of the first canton defeated the Socialists at the second ballot with the help of the Catholics, and in the second canton they defeated the Catholics with the help of the Socialists, while in the third canton they were themselves defeated by the Catholics helped by the Socialists. At Brussels, the same year, where a second ballot took place in the five cantons, the Liberal minority captured every one of the 44 seats!

To avoid all this muddle, the Liberals and the Socialists have sometimes lately formed a single list, each party furnishing its share of candidates; but these coalitions often turn aside electors who are extremists, or who simply prefer a straightforward policy. Moreover this expedient is impossible in single member districts.

No wonder if, with such precedents under their eyes, the country nearly rose in 1899, when it was proposed to seek a remedy in the partition of all the actual districts into single member constituencies, a change which would have simply multiplied the evils of the majority system.

669. (*Chairman.*) You are a member of the Belgian Senate?—Secretary of the Belgian Senate.

670. You are a warm supporter of the Proportional Representation System?—Yes, and I have been for many years.

671. In fact, I may say the system in force in Belgium at the present moment is largely due to your own personal effort?—I joined rather late, that is to say towards 1890, but the movement had been going on already for many years.

672. In the memorandum you have circulated to the Commission you say the fight for proportional representation lasted from 1865 to 1900, practically?—Yes.

673. One or two methods have been tried, and finally the system known as the "List System," is the one which has met with most acceptance?—I cannot say that anything had been tried till 1895. In 1895 they brought forward partial Proportional Representation laws for the Communal Elections as an experiment. That is the only case to which it had been applied so far.

674. Was that actually in operation?—Yes, it was, but on a different system. If you like I could tell you the difference.

675. The idea arose under the influence of John Stuart Mill. That is your opinion?—That was the first waking up of the movement.

676. It met at first with hostility?—Absolutely. It was laughed at.

677. Can you tell us what gave rise to the change of opinion?—It was by constant effort, always bringing the question before the public, showing after every election that the results were unfair with the actual system, and showing also that if there was a proportional representation system the result would have been fairer. But that did not convince either the members of Parliament or the wire-pullers—the people connected with politics and the elections. It was rather in the hands of theorists in those days. Then in 1892, after the revision of our constitution, there arose a third party, and the result of the appearance of this third party was that there was no more a majority in most of the constituencies; there were several minorities. Therefore, the majority system could not be applied, and it was always a minority that got the seat at the second ballot.

678. A combination of minorities?—Yes. As a rule the organisations did not make a coalition, but the

electors themselves who had to settle the question, settled it somehow.

679. In fact after each election it was felt that the majority elected did not represent the opinion of the country?—Yes, and that was proven by numbers and figures.

680. This was intensified by the development of the third party?—Yes.

681. You say, as the population increased some of the larger districts came to return as many as 15 or even 18 members?—Yes, and now Brussels has 21 members.

682. It was generally felt that some change was necessary?—Yes, there was nearly a revolution on the subject.

683. The system which has been adopted you think has answered the expectations of the promoters?—Absolutely.

684. Does it reflect the opinion of the country?—Yes.

685. Can you say that it is easy of application?—Very easy. There are much less complaints of frauds in the computation of votes—none at all, in fact.

686. Does this system tend to reduce the power of the actual majority?—Yes, it does considerably. When it was applied the majority in power did not disappear; though it fell largely, it still remained.

687. Has any difficulty arisen in carrying on the Government, owing to the weakness of the majority?—Not so far, because the majority remains about 10, which makes about 20 votes difference in the count.

688. And that is sufficient for the Government of the day to carry on its work?—Yes, so far it has been sufficient.

689. When the change was first introduced did the ordinary elector find any difficulty?—None whatever.

690. Any system such as you have in Belgium you think could be worked in any country?—I should say so. Now it was perhaps made easier at home, because we had a form of voting paper which lent itself to the application of proportional representation. The different parties had only to propose a list of their candidates, and the elector had to vote on the same kind of paper in the same way as to-day by blackening a small spot opposite the names.

691. That is a fair representation of it (*producing a paper*)?—That is one of the actual papers.

692. In practice not many papers are spoiled?—The first time there were a few, but now that has entirely disappeared. Each party, through the wards and through their agents, educate the electors, and there is nothing easier to tell them. There is no necessity even for them to know how to read or write. They have simply to blacken *there* or *there*, or anywhere.

693. Now the vote is made compulsory?—Yes, it is.

694. When this was first applied large numbers of electors voted for the first time, probably who never voted before?—No, it was compulsory before.

695. Do many electors refuse to fill in their papers?—No, very few. It depends. In some cases when they are not satisfied with the list they may refuse, but it is a great exception. There is too much interest in returning somebody. Besides that, party organisations include nearly all Belgians. Every elector belongs to one of our three parties.

696. This system rather enables the party organisations to obtain great power?—Yes.

697. Do you attribute any drawbacks to that?—There are some complaints of the electors who are outside of the electoral associations. They can get in if they choose, of course, but those outside complain they have very little voice in the matter. Of course, they can reverse the order, but the order on the list is established by the party organisation, or rather by the candidates themselves. The candidates themselves declare before an official that they come forward together and form the same list, and in this order; but this order has been established before by their party organisation. It is possible though for electors to reverse that order. For instance, Brussels returns 21 members, and there are about a few hundreds less than 300,000 votes, with the plural votes—about 200,000 electors, giving 300,000 votes. It is enough for about 13,000 electors to blacken

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the points opposite one name at the bottom of the list if they choose, and then that one will pass over the last one that would have been elected otherwise.

698. In practice do many electors give a preference?—No; they are perfectly free to do it, but they do not.

699. They vote for the party list?—Yes, as a rule. There have been examples of candidates elected in that way, but very few. That is the electors' own fault. They could do it if they chose.

700. Has any suggestion ever been made to have any system of transferable voting in the list itself?—The suggestion has been made, but it has never been much supported so far.

701. It would make it very complicated?—I do not think it would complicate it at all, so far as that goes. One system is as good as the other.

702. But the necessity hardly arises?—It hardly arises. The real inconvenience that we have, and the real flaw in the system is that our districts are too unequal. For instance, one district returns two members, several districts return three or four members, others 15 or 18 members, and Brussels 21.

703. Brussels is the largest, I suppose?—Yes, that is the largest. Our aim, at least the aim of those first in the movement, would be to have several small districts put together so as to get nearer a common level.

704. What sort of number would you have—less than five I suppose would not be applicable?—More than five. Nine or ten I should say would be a good number. We have made a proposal to turn our main provinces into electoral districts, with perhaps the exception of Brabant, where the province is composed of half Flemish and half Walloons, and it would be better to keep them apart.

705. But you try to maintain the identity of any particular place, like Brussels, for instance. You would not think of subdividing Brussels?—Not at all, but let me distinguish. The district of Brussels comprises the town, properly speaking, and then a certain number of rural villages close by. Those villages might be separated, because there the interests and ideas are quite different, and even the language. Brussels speaks French, and those surrounding districts—cantons, as we call them—speak only Flemish.

706. Of course, the larger the constituency the more proportional is the representation?—Yes, of course.

707. Do independent candidates obtain a chance of being returned?—Much more than under the majority system. For instance, in Brussels a man who could collect 13,000 votes would be returned; whereas formerly a man in order to be returned would have required (with the same number of voters) 200,000.

707A. But it is not necessary for him to have an organisation behind him?—No, provided he finds the number of electors to support him he can make a list by himself, and if he has 100 supporters to sign the list he can come forward.

708. For instance, on this particular paper that we have there is one shown?—Yes; there, one of the contending lists contains a single name only.

709. He had to obtain 100 qualified electors to nominate him?—Yes, and if in those days he had received about 9,000 votes he would have been elected, but he did not receive them.

710. Under this system is there any possibility of party organisers putting forward candidates to weaken their opponents?—No, not under this system. Under the communal system, yes, but not under this system. The only thing they could do would be, if they had no candidate of their own, to try to vote for one at the bottom of the list—the weakest, perhaps—to give him a better place; but it has never been seen, that I know of.

711. That is rather to bring their opponents into discredit?—Yes. Of course, some at the bottom of the list have been elected, but not for that reason. Part of the electorate of their own party were dissatisfied with the way the list was made.

712. As to the supplementary candidates, do you find that arrangement answers well?—For us it is about the only way, because by-elections could not be carried out on a proportional system.

713. Was it ever considered that you should have an election for a vacancy?—I do not see how it could be worked out with proportional representation. Of course, you could have it even with proportional representation, but that would be a majority system again.

714. Can the same gentleman be on the actual list of candidates and on the supplementary list?—Yes, you often see that. Often one who consents to be the last on the first list becomes the first on the supplementary list.

715. The elector has the power of voting for the actual list and for the supplementary list?—He must unless he votes at the top. The top includes the whole thing. But if he chooses a name on the first part of the list he must vote again on the supplementary list.

716. In a constituency where one party is overwhelmingly superior to the other, they might run a list for all vacant seats?—I do not think it is often the case. Of course, in a district which has two or three or even four members, that might be the case, but not oftener than that.

717. So it would require an overwhelming majority to practically secure the entire representation?—Yes. I am speaking of the parliamentary elections. The communal election is different. That is another system.

718. Is that the old second ballot system?—No. Our electoral régime is very complicated. The majority system is kept for the election of what is called the provincial councils. That is still going on to-day. It brought about a strange result, which I perhaps will tell you a word about in a moment. For Communes where there is an absolute majority, it is the majority system that prevails. The list which gets an absolute majority fills all the seats, but if there is no absolute majority the seats are distributed amongst all the candidates according to proportional representation. That has been considered a failure generally. It was the first experiment.

719. Will the list system be extended, do you think?—I think so. There is a strong movement for it. The provincial councils are elected by the old majority system, and in several provinces there is no longer a majority. The provincial councils only sit once a year, and they elect the executive power of the province—that is what they call the *députation permanente*—of six members. The council itself elects them. There is no longer a majority in two provinces; they are teeming with minorities at present elected by the majority system. There are Catholics, Liberals, and Socialists, and of course the councillors of two parties have to coalesce in order to elect the executive. Practically, the result has been that in three provinces—in Liege, Brabant, and Hainault—the Socialists and Liberals have made an agreement together, and have put on the executive, say, five Liberals and one Socialist, or even three Socialists and three good Liberals. So there we have an executive power which has been elected by proportional representation, so to speak, although it proceeds from a body that has been elected by the majority system. That works well.

720. You say: "Everybody acknowledged the result was fair"?—Yes, in the general elections.

721. Would you go so far as to say that the former opponents of the system are now converted?—Most of them—not every one. Now and then you meet some oldish gentleman, say, who is given to the idea of the superiority of the majority system.

722. But there is no formidable party which wishes to revert to the old system?—No. The Socialists are more opposed to it, or rather some fraction of them are. In the province of Hainault especially, where there is a large industrial population, they wish in the provincial councils and in the Communal Councils to get their full majority, and to do what they like with it. Of course they have been obliged to give up seats, and they do not like that. Besides, as I explain in my memorandum, their principal aim is to abolish plural voting. They say that plural voting accompanied by the proportional representation system is giving too much influence to the Conservative element. What they wish to abolish in fact is not the proportional representation system, but the plural voting.

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723. For the plural vote, do you have the property qualification and the intellectual qualification?—Yes; it can go so far as three votes for Parliament, and four votes for the Commune.

724. Would the voter with the highest number, that is three votes, be given three papers to fill in?—Yes, if he has three votes he has three papers, and they are all put in the same box.

725. You cannot tell how they vote at all?—No, not at all.

726. It is only guess work?—It is impossible to tell. Of course the Socialist Party pretend that all single votes are their's, but I do not think so.

727. In the third point of your memorandum you say: "There is a growing complaint that the Belgian system gives too much power to the Party organisations because it leaves with the supporters of each list the right to settle the order of precedence between the candidates"?—Yes, that is what I have explained.

728. It is a complaint, but you do not think it is a formidable one?—It is simply formal. Nothing would prevent them from suppressing the top vote and asking the electors to vote for whom they like on the list.

729. I see you compare this list system with the scheme which has been suggested by Lord Courtney and his friends, known as the single transferable vote?—Yes, in the model election the result is the same in both.

730. If you applied the list system to the model election you say the result would have been the same?—Yes.

731. It is natural you should prefer your own system to the suggested one?—Yes. The only objection I have to the single transferable vote is the allowance to vote for two different parties. That may be a merit in the eyes of other people, but we consider one elector has the right to choose one party, one programme or one list, and not the right to choose candidates from several parties.

732. You have summed it up in "one man, one vote, one party, one candidate"?—Yes, including the abolition of plural voting, of course.

733. In comparing the single transferable vote with the list system, do not you think that the single transferable vote gives more chance to the absolutely independent candidate?—I do not think so, because with us any independent candidate who can get just the needed strict proportion can be elected. If he has not got that proportion he has no right to be elected on the proportional representation system.

734. As to the practical conduct of the election is there much difficulty in the counting of the votes?—None whatever. It is very quickly done and very correctly.

735. In deciding the order of the list, is there any difficulty?—No. Inside our party organisations we very often use the single transferable vote. That is to say, all the candidates are put in a line and each member of the organisation or committee of the association puts 1, 2, 3, according to his preference. There we use that system.

736. It practically means that you have an election within the party before the General Election comes on?—Very often. Of course, there are some districts where the members come forward by themselves, or a small committee presents members, but as a rule there is an association which votes. Electoral agents were at first very much opposed as a rule to the proportional representation system, and they fought hard against it. They were afraid they could not pull the wires afterwards so easily, nor obtain such large results at once.

737. Do you think this system has caused the Belgians to take more or less interest in politics?—More; because in many districts where a dissenting member had never before been thought of, people who have never interested themselves in politics have seen now a chance of returning a member of their own opinion.

738. As to the character of candidates who come forward, has the system tended to increase the respect in which they are held? Are they more independent?—They are more independent, and besides, there is this great advantage that now a man who is connected with a district, and has a position as one of the leaders of a party, if you like, has the chance to be elected by his

own electors instead of being obliged to go and seek a seat elsewhere. That is the case with many of our members, especially among the Socialists.

739. So it has had the effect of making the local feeling stronger than it was before?—Much stronger.

740. The advantages of a single-member constituency are that the member and his constituents are closely connected?—That is all very well if they belong to the majority, but if they belong to the minority it is not so.

741. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) I understand that before 1899, Belgium was divided into electoral districts returning each from 1 to 13 members?—From 1 to 18 members.

742. How many single-member districts were there in those days?—Not very many, perhaps seven or eight.

743. How many two-member districts?—Those were a little more numerous; perhaps about ten.

744. Has it ever been proposed in Belgium to introduce the single-member-district plan?—Yes.

745. I learn from Sir Arthur Hardinge's despatch that Monsieur Van den Peereboom introduced a Bill in 1899. Did that propose to introduce single-member districts?—No, it was a combination. Both the single-member and double-member districts remained. It was a very badly drawn Bill, and the Opposition saw in it a kind of process of gerrymandering, with the idea of establishing for ever the domination of the Catholic party, created such an agitation that, as I say, we nearly and it got into a revolution on the subject. Then Liberals and Catholics both claimed proportional representation.

746. So that the English plan of single-member districts has never been tried?—It has never been tried, but it has never been in favour because they saw unsurmountable objections to it.

747. Do you say that under the existing system the Government has a majority of about 10 in the Chamber?—Yes.

748. Is that majority homogeneous?—Yes, absolutely.

749. Is it not a combination?—No, it is an absolute majority. The Democratic Catholic party only succeeded in returning one member. There is thus one separated from the majority in certain cases.

750. There are three main groups, I understand?—Only three.

751. And the majority in the Chamber represents which?—The Catholics. A few years ago there was an attempt to create a fourth party. Sir Arthur Hardinge is quite fair, but in his report he made a confusion between independent members and the Independent party. Only a few years ago in Brussels they tried to start a third party so called independent. That was under the majority system, but they never succeeded in getting a seat except by making a coalition with the Catholics, and the Catholics allowing certain of those so-called Independents to be on their list. Of course, with the proportional election the Catholics dropped them, and since then they have never succeeded in getting a single seat.

752. How does the proportional system work in the districts which return two members?—The same way. We apply the same formula. I ought to give you figures about that.

753. I am only asking in general terms. Are there any cases in which the majority returns both members in a two-member district?—I think perhaps there are one or two in the Flemish provinces, but there must be an overwhelming majority for that.

754. But in the majority of the two-member districts votes could be divided between the two parties?—Yes, but there is only one, and in that single two-member district it is divided—there is a Liberal and a Catholic.

755. Only one two-member district left?—Yes.

756. Is there any single-member district left?—No.

757. I see you also speak in your memorandum of the coalitions which have been formed in recent times. You say that the Liberals and Socialists have sometimes lately formed a single list, each party furnishing a share of the candidates, and then you go on to say: "This expedient is impossible in single-member districts"?—Of course, the single member must belong to one of the two parties.

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758. But might not the district belong to a coalition of two minorities?—I mean that the candidate must be either Liberal or Socialist.

759. Yes, but the member would be the choice of the combined forces of the Liberals and Socialists?—Of course he would be, but one of the two parties goes to the wall, and it would be impossible for him even after his election to please both parties.

760. But it might modify the character of the candidate. He might have a leaning either to the Socialist side or to the Liberal side?—These we should call *chauves-souris*.

761. Do you prefer the list system to what I might perhaps call Lord Courtney's system?—Yes, I prefer it, although I consider that a minor point, provided, as I say again, in Belgium we stick to this—that a man ought only to give the single transferable vote (if it was established) between the candidates of one party. He ought to be restricted to vote for one party and one list.

762. You consider it essential in Belgium that the power of transfer should be confined to the list?—Yes.

763. You do not see your way to carry on bye-elections under the proportional representation system?—No; there was a proposal made, that if the minority was large enough it would receive the seat in the next election. But I do not see how it could work to give it alternately. I do not see, in fact, how it could be done.

764. (*Chairman.*) You only have a Parliament for four years. There is an election every four years?—Yes, members are elected for four years, but the elections take place in half the provinces every second year, so in fact the half of Parliament is renewed every two years.

765. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It is your opinion that the adoption of the proportional representation system has on the whole improved the quality of the members elected?—Yes, because allowed it each party to choose its own leaders.

766. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) One of the objections which have been brought against large constituencies in England, is that they are very expensive to canvass, and that the difficulties and expenditure incurred by a candidate in making acquaintance with so many voters would be very great. Is that found to be the case in Belgium?—From what I hear our expenses are much less than yours, even with your single member constituencies.

767. To what do you attribute the difference?—The way of canvassing, evidently.

768. Are the rules different?—I do not know exactly what your rules are, but it is not in the habits of the country to spend as much money as you do here. The expenses are borne partly by the candidate and partly by the organisations themselves, as a rule; in some small districts of course the candidates may have to pay everything, but as a rule the general members of the parties contribute large sums.

769. (*Chairman.*) But the expenditure of the returning officer is met by the State?—Yes.

770. From Imperial taxes?—Yes, but it comes to very little, because they are State officials, who are not paid specially. We only pay what we call the calculators, who are sometimes accountants; besides a trifle to the electors who sit on the counting board, what we call the *scrutateurs*.

771. Is any difficulty experienced in getting these calculators?—None whatever.

772. An ordinary bank clerk is capable of making the calculations, I suppose?—Yes, it is a short operation. It is only the number of them that is very tiring; when you have to deal with 300,000 votes, it would be a long process, but, as a rule, it is reduced to a very easy process, and made a very quick operation.

773. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Are the majority of the candidates local or from other places?—Under the majority system they were not so much local, but now they are. It is very difficult for a man from another constituency to come in on the list.

774. Have the electors an idea of each candidate personally, do you think, or do they simply vote for the man at the head of the list?—As a rule they vote for the list, but that is rather on account of laziness on

their part, because they could do otherwise if they chose.

775. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) I see that you say that before the introduction of the new system the constituencies were as large as 18 members in some cases?—There is one with 21 members now.

776. Before the introduction of this system there were some of 18?—Yes, before there were.

777. And therefore the change caused by the new system was not as great in Belgium as it would be in England, because all our constituencies are one or two-member constituencies?—Except in some parts—very small districts, and those are put together to make three, or four, or five-member constituencies.

778. You have as low as a two-member constituency in one case?—One.

779. And several three-member constituencies?—Yes.

780. What do you think the smallest size ought to be?—Five. Three would do, and I will tell you why. Where there are three parties each party might have the chance of getting one; but for a full working of the system I think five ought to be the minimum; nine or ten would be better.

781. Yes, because if you go below five the minorities have not a fair chance?—Yes, there are too many minorities left out in the country at large.

782. That is especially so under the list system I take it, because with the list system the Independent has a smaller chance than under the single transferable vote system?—That may be.

783. I see the electors of Brussels are 200,000 in number?—There are about 200,000, but they have 299,000 votes.

784. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Owing to the plural votes?—Yes.

785. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) How do the candidates get known to the electors?—By meetings and circulars. You must distinguish districts there. In the small constituencies they can still get to the electors personally; but in any large ones they use meetings, and the Press, and circulars, and all that kind of thing, and the heaviest electoral expense with us is the circulation of circulars, sending them by post. Then there are meetings in many districts which are held everywhere, even in small villages, and there is generally some local organisation that holds a meeting and invites the young men of the party who go from village to village, always repeating the same thing, but as there are a lot of people to hear it, it does not matter. I should add that all these proceedings were in use before, but they are conducted now in a much more orderly manner. Before, under the majority system, very often one party tried to disturb and break up the meetings of the other parties. Now each party remains in its own place and does its own affairs, and chooses its own men, and there is no mixture and no disturbance between them.

786. In the large constituencies, I suppose, where it is harder to get the candidate known to the electors the power of the party organisation is greater than in the small constituencies. I suppose the elector in Brussels is more than likely to vote his party list without question than in some smaller constituency where he knows the men personally?—I cannot say that is the case. On the contrary, it is especially in Brussels and large districts that they are trying to get candidates in against the party. When a minority thinks itself ill-used and that it has not got its fair share on the list, or does not see on the list of its party the man it prefers, it is apt to separate and to present a list of its own. That is how it is explained that in the ballot paper which you have there are six lists.

787. But only three of those were effective lists?—Yes.

788. The other three were hardly counted at all?—In this case four got in.

789. They got one Independent in?—Yes, a *Démocrate-chrétien*.

790. My point was rather this: If you increase the size of the constituency up to a large number of members, do you not thereby increase the power of the party organisation?—I do not see it, because I tell you any member—take Brussels, which is always the

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largest—who can make himself known and who can find in the electorate 13,000 votes, can be elected. There have been many attempts like that in the case of local interests. Even some professions try to bring up a candidate. There is one of that kind in that list who came by himself. I do not know how many votes he got, but he did not get his 13,000 votes, and could not get in.

791. If you are to have the system of by-elections—and I think they are a permanent part of our political system—it must be by a majority I suppose?—I do not see any other way.

792. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) The opposition to the proportional representation system when it first came in, I understood you to say, came mainly from the party agents?—Not mainly, but they were nearly every one of them opposed to it.

793. Are they now opposed to it?—Now perhaps there are other agents, and, as a rule, they do not complain of it any more. Not only the political agents opposed it, but also, strange to say, two kinds of political men—the leaders, and those who were rather at the lower end and who knew they would lose their seats if it was established. The leaders opposed it for the same reason as the political agents, and that was because they were afraid they would not be able to pull the wires and it would break the discipline of the party. That was their principal fear.

794. It had the effect of reducing the majority of the party in power to 10?—Yes.

795. But you consider that large enough for a working majority?—The events show it.

796. I think you said there was a certain growing agitation against the strength of the party system, and that some people had advocated the removing of the vote on the top of the list?—Yes.

797. What effect would that have upon it?—It would have no effect on the representation of the parties, because they would always get the same number that they do now; but it might have an effect in the choice of the elected members in each party. For instance, one objection to this suppression is that if you let the electors decide absolutely which members of the list will be elected the result is that the candidates of the same party will fight between themselves in order to get votes enough to get precedence of one another. That is one of the reasons of the present system—to avoid that fight—although there is always a fight, of course, within party lines. There is perhaps a combination which I have thought of and proposed which might lead to the advantage of the precedence being left with the party, but at the same time increase more or less the power of the electors. That would be to suppress the top case, but leaving to the party the right to regulate the order of precedence. So that each elector should be obliged to vote against one particular name, and then I would sum up all the surplus votes and all the votes that have not been employed. All those who get the quota would be elected, but the surplus votes and unemployed votes should be added together, and then they should be distributed amongst the non-elected candidates on the list according to the places which the party has assigned to them on the list.

798. (Chairman.) Does not Sir Arthur Hardinge very correctly interpret your views?—Yes, except that I ought to qualify a few things he says.

799. But on this particular point perhaps you will look at what he says (*handing a document to the witness*)?—This relates to the proposal of M. Destrée, one of the Socialist leaders, that a certain quota of votes, established for the whole country, should secure a seat in any constituency. Sir Arthur Hardinge has just put his finger on the objection to this system when he says: "How this is to be arranged consistently with the maintenance of the existing electoral divisions M. Destrée does not explain." He wants to divide up the whole country. Many combinations are possible. Of course if it could be done it would be an improvement, there is no doubt about that.

800. That is almost going back to Mr. Hare's scheme?—Yes. Of course it could be done if you made the whole country one constituency, but the great problem of proportional representation in my opinion is

to combine the two things—the local representation and the proportional representation of the parties.

801. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) In the existing list system in Belgium a party forms a list. Then how would those candidates proceed to work the constituency? Would they divide up the constituency among them according to the places in which they were best known and then proceed to address meetings in that district?—Of course they will arrange that between themselves. A candidate goes to one meeting in one place where he is better known, and another to another place; those who can talk Flemish go to the Flemish villages; those who do not, remain in Brussels, and so on in each large constituency.

802. They proceed to carry on a campaign in favour of their party advocating that the electors should vote for themselves and the other candidates?—Yes, in the order they have agreed to arrange between themselves. They must sign a paper saying this is the list they have arranged between themselves, because officially the parties are not known. One only knows the candidate and his 100 supporters. The candidates come forward and say: "We form one list together, and we present that list in such a manner that Mr. So-and-So is No. 1, Mr. So-and-So No. 2, and so on."

803. Each candidate therefore speaks on behalf of the list?—Yes.

804. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) It would be considered unfair if a candidate said: "Vote for me first"?—Yes; it has been done though. One of the Catholic members in Brussels has got in in that way, but of course he is more or less looked down upon by the others, and I do not know what will happen next time.

805. It is not considered playing the game?—It is not considered fair. Then there is the case where he has not himself requested votes of preference, but has had three or four papers with him, and it is these papers that have made the request to the electors, and he did not protest.

806. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) How many elections have been held under this system?—1900, 1902, 1904, 1906, and 1908—that is, five general elections.

807. Do you say the stability of the Government has been greater than previously, and that there have not been such fluctuations?—Their majorities have rather decreased. I do not remember what they had at first, but they have lost a few seats since, and still have a working majority.

808. In this country, as I daresay you know, there are considerable fluctuations of political opinion?—Yes.

809. Had you ever a similar comparable fluctuation of political opinion in Belgium?—Not to such an extent. Of course under the majority system there came a moment when there was an enormous change after many years, but such changes are not always sincere under the majority system. M. Beernaert, the Catholic leader, who was a great advocate from the first of proportional representation, told Parliament in 1892 when there was a large Catholic majority returned that it would have been turned into a minority if about 325 electors belonging to the opposition had been distributed among certain districts.

810. In the fight which you described as having lasted for 35 years, was it a burning popular question?—It became so. For many years at first it was not.

811. But before it approached success there was considerable popular interest in it?—Yes; we made model elections as has been done here, and we went from town to town to explain the system and show its advantages.

812. Was the opposition very considerable?—Yes, much more in Parliament than outside. Nearly all the Belgian Press rallied round proportional representation with two or three exceptions, but in Parliament there were still a great many to oppose it for the reasons I just gave you. It was not, however, a party question.

813. Among the Belgian people, how did the towns and the rural districts compare? Was the opposition stronger to it in the town or in the country?—I can hardly say that. No, I do not think it ran like that. It was a question of individual or local feeling. Perhaps

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[Continued.]

two provinces were more against it: Hainault, as I said, where the Socialists and Liberals had large majorities, and also Limbourg where everything was Catholic; their representatives were very much opposed to it.

814. What induced you to adopt in your country compulsory voting?—In 1892 we reformed our Constitution. The electorate was suddenly enlarged tenfold. It was 140,000 electors before, and it came to be at once 1,400,000. M. Beernaert, who was the first Minister, saw the danger, and thought from a Conservative point of view compulsory voting would be a safeguard. Just as he proposed other measures which were not carried—he wanted to strengthen the Senate and to introduce a Referendum to counterbalance the extension of the franchise.

815. But the compulsory voting system would hardly be necessary now. You do not think it affects the result of your elections?—Who can say what it would be if it was not compulsory? Who could say what electors would remain at home? The compulsory voting was established eight years before proportional representation. As a rule I think it is a good thing.

816. I think you say that no party who could avoid it would put upon their list any candidate who was not known in the constituency for which he desired representation?—It would be difficult. Besides, the local men might object to not having the representation come to them, and it going to a stranger.

817. If a party had to choose between the adoption of two candidates, one of whom was a far better better politician than the other, but had no local connection, it would be far better to run the local man than the better politician?—I think it would be better

to run the better politician, but I do not know how the electors would decide. That all depends on the man.

818. (*Lord Loches.*) When a preference is indicated in the list system, the vote only counts for the member preferred?—No, it counts for the list first. It is a double simultaneous vote. You vote simultaneously for the list, and for one name on that list.

819. Then so far as the list is concerned, the effect is the same, whether you spot the paper at the top or against one name at the side?—That is so, absolutely.

820. You give one preference only?—You give a preference to that candidate.

821. And one only?—One only.

822. Could you say whether in practice the preference vote is extensively used or not?—No, it is not, although it is simply by the fault of the electors, because they have a right to do it, and they do not choose to do it.

823. It is very little used?—Very little used. I do not say it is not used at all, but perhaps in 300,000 votes there will be 40,000 or 30,000 preferential votes.

824. You mentioned the case of a preferential vote which would put a man in?—Yes, there have been several cases.

825. That is very exceptional?—Yes.

826. (*Chairman.*) Will you allow me to put your memorandum in as part of your evidence to appear on our copy of the Minutes?—Certainly, it is at your disposal.* When constituencies have 40,000 new inhabitants, they receive one member more, but that is only done every tenth year at the general census.

* See page 52.

The witness withdrew.

SIXTH DAY.

Thursday, 6th May 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
LL.D., D.C.L.

The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Mr. JOHN RENWICK SEAGER called and examined.

827. (*Chairman.*) You are Secretary of the Registration Department of the Liberal Central Association?—I am.

828. You have had considerable experience in electioneering matters?—A great many years' experience, nearly 35.

829. Have you gone into the questions of the various schemes that have been proposed in opposition to the present system?—Certainly.

830. In the first place, do you consider the present system satisfactory?—Extremely unsatisfactory.

831. Then any scheme which would improve it would meet with your approval. You think it ought to be improved?—There must be some alteration, clearly; I think we all admit that.

832. Have you any preference for any one of the various methods which have been proposed?—I have a distinct preference for the alternative vote. The proportional representation scheme is admirable in theory, I think. We all admit that, and I confess to having been very much bitten with it years ago, but I do not think it is workable, and I do not think the time has come in this country to try it.

833. I think we had better take the systems in the same order as you have them in your memorandum. The first one is proportional voting?—My objections, as I have set out in my memorandum, are threefold.

In the first place, I greatly fear the tendency to form small groups in the House of Commons. I think that the division of the country into two great parties is for the benefit of the country and the stability of the Government. The second point is that the grouping of constituencies into large areas would have the effect of multiplying the cost of elections to the individual members. I do not think you could always take it that all the members—say, seven candidates for Birmingham—would agree to stand together. You may have probably two or three men standing together, but not the whole seven, for various reasons. In that case the proportionate amount that they would have to spend would be vastly in excess of what they pay now.

834. Each candidate, instead of having an area as at present to cover, would have practically seven times that area?—Quite so.

835. And you do not anticipate that there would be combination, or frequently there would not be combination between them?—I think frequently there would be no combination of the whole number. You would probably have them running in two groups. At all events, I think the cost, even if they ran together, would probably exceed what it is now, with the one exception, of the returning officer's charges, which might possibly be a little cheapened by taking the whole area of Birmingham in one instead of dividing it up into

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[Continued.]

seven constituencies. The other point, I think, is this: That the tendency would be to confuse the elector himself. If the elector is confronted with a ballot paper with 20 names upon which he has to express a preference, not merely make seven crosses, I think the average elector would probably be confused. I think, moreover, upon that, that the modern tendency of Liberal opinion has been in favour, not of grouping, but of still further having single-member constituencies, and getting rid of the double-barrelled ones. Therefore I do not agree at all with the proportional representation scheme—not now. It may come in years to come.

836. Do you attach any value to the idea that the minority should receive representation?—In a sense they do, in a rough-and-ready way, get that now. I do not attach much importance to it being scientifically arranged, and for the reasons I have given. I think it is the duty of the minority to turn itself into a majority by reason and in course of time.

837. But it is conceivable that there may be certain phases of opinion which receive no representation?—That is quite possible—extreme opinions.

838. It might be greatly to the advantage of the community that there should be such representation?—Personally, I am doubtful upon that point. My own view is that at the present time you get in the House of Commons two great parties, the predominant parties, who, within their own ranks, practically cover the whole of the shades of opinion of their parties. But there are, I quite admit, the Socialist group, who belong to neither party.

839. The present system does not allow the independent member much chance of being returned?—That is so, I quite agree.

840. Under the scheme of proportional representation, the chances of his being returned would be greatly strengthened?—No doubt; but I do not think that would tend to good government. I think it would tend to government by the wobbler; and I pity the Prime Minister who has to govern where there is a multiplicity of groups.

841. In fact, you will not admit that the individualist is an accession to the House as a whole?—As a rule, not.

842. The result of any method of proportional representation would mean the reduction in the size of majority?—Yes, distinctly.

843. You anticipate that the working majority would almost be reduced to a vanishing point?—Quite so. You would always be subject to combinations and groups, and never be quite sure where you were as a party.

844. Do you think there is any evil in the present system, by which one party obtains a large majority and then, by the swing of the pendulum, is turned into a very small minority?—Yes, I think it is to be regretted, and I think the system of alternative voting, which we shall discuss presently, would get rid of that difficulty largely.

845. With reference to the question of amalgamating several constituencies and forming a large electoral area, you do not see any advantage in that?—No.

846. For instance, you do not think that centres like Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and so on, would be more homogeneous as one constituency?—I do not think you could make variations of representation. If you were to take Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, and treat them differently, I see difficulties in the way. You must give a general principle of grouping. On the whole, I think it is a mistake, and I am against the principle of grouping.

847. You have no doubt in your mind that if the system be adopted it would have to be adopted for the whole country?—That is so.

848. You would not take the large boroughs, and start with them; you would not approve of that?—No, I prefer to start with the alternative vote, which I think is a step in the direction of proportional representation.

849. In the conclusion of your remarks about proportional representation, you say you believe your views are shared by the Liberal agents throughout the country?—That I am sure of. The Liberal agents as

a whole, so far as I know, are none of them in favour of it; and as to the organisations, I do not know of one Liberal organisation that has ever passed a resolution in favour of it.

850. That is from a national point of view quite as much as from a purely partisan point of view?—Quite.

851. I suppose you come in contact with all classes throughout the county?—Yes.

852. Have you come across any demand for a change in this direction, not so much from politicians as from the general public?—Here and there you do find groups of gentlemen who look upon it from an intellectual point of view—a mere theoretical point of view, perhaps, who are in favour of it, I quite admit; but I do not think it has made any headway in the past 30 years, since I took any part in the working.

853. You have observed, no doubt, that the Press are almost without exception in favour of this scheme?—I was not aware of that.

854. Were you present at the last test election?—No, the first one, 30 years ago.

855. The comments in the Press, I think I may say, were very favourable to Lord Courtney's last election?—As far as counting is concerned, I have always held it is easy and expeditious, and in its way satisfactory from that point of view. It is rather from the election, or electors' point of view, that I am putting it.

856. You anticipate that the elector would find difficulty in actually marking his ballot-paper?—I think so.

857. Have you any experience of this system in other countries?—No, none.

858. You cannot tell whether the electors find it difficult there or not?—No, I have no knowledge of anything outside this country with regard to elections.

859. If it be shown that in other countries they find no difficulty, you will admit we would be able to do quite as well?—From an intellectual point of view; but I do not think, if I may say so, it is quite fair to compare us with Belgium, for instance, where I know the system has been adopted, but with other things—compulsory voting, for example, and plural voting from 1 to 3, according to a person's position—all those things alter the position entirely. They are not on the same foundation as ourselves.

860. You do not base your objection principally on the ground of confusing the minds of the electors?—Not at all. My principal ground, I am bound to say, is the question of policy, and the opportunity for the formation of small groups.

861. Now we come to the system of the second ballot?—I think if we could get nothing better than that, I should be in favour of a second ballot; but I think there are many objections to it. I think, in the first place, there would be considerable extra cost—practically double cost; because wherever a candidate was not elected by an absolute majority, after an interval of time, whether it be a week or a fortnight, the second ballot which would be taken would mean going through the whole of the election again. It is not merely the time and trouble, but the actual money cost of agents and clerks, and committee rooms, and printing, and the various things that go to make up an election; and very few men could afford that second ballot.

862. But as a practical way of securing the true opinion of the constituency, do you think it is a good method?—No, I do not. It is more workable, I think, than the proportional system. I do not think it is a good method, because I am afraid the effect of the second ballot would be a diminished number of persons voting the second time. Men who might make a struggle to vote, to be in time once to vote, would not go the second time.

863. You mean the party supporting the third candidate on the list?—It is quite possible that the votes might be so proportioned that the result did not represent at all the constituency. The voting might be given to some extent, out of ill-feeling or spite, to the other man. My great point is that I think the second ballot would not bring about sufficient interest in the election.

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[Continued.]

864. And would merely cause unnecessary expense?—Great extra expense.

865. Now we come to the alternative vote?—That system is the one which I prefer of the three. It has many advantages over the second ballot. In the first place, the decision is on one counting, and no extra expense is incurred by any candidate. Secondly, it gives the opportunity for any number of candidates standing, and all being voted for, and a decision arrived at from the total number, instead of as under the second ballot, the elimination of the bottom names, and taking the election upon the remaining ones. I think that alone is sufficient to show that it is more important than the second ballot. In the third place, it would get rid of all the heated feeling which would naturally be engendered by the second ballot, and it would be quite easy under the single-member system for the man to put "1" or "2" against the persons he prefers in that order.

866. You do not think that that would lead to confusion in the minds of the electorate?—None at all. The cumulative vote system for the school board, for instance, is recent, and did not cause any trouble, where the voter had not any preference, but had to divide his votes up. I do not think there will be any trouble in that way. Moreover, bringing it down to making two marks, "1" and "2," instead of putting a X, is so simple that I think every elector could see the force of it. Although the opportunity would be given to any number of candidates, it is not very likely you would have more than three or four candidates for a constituency.

867. You have referred to the old school board system of the cumulative vote, but surely that has been found by experience not to work very well?—I am against it entirely. I do not believe in that as a system. I am only citing it as an instance in which the electors did not find a difficulty in putting numbers instead of crosses against the names. I think I might say upon that system of alternative voting that Mr. Robertson's Bill is one which I approve of all the way through until he deals with the two-member constituencies, and then I do not agree with his proposals in that respect.

868. In your opinion you prefer to have only single-member constituencies?—Yes; but taking matters as they are, with 27 double-member constituencies, Mr. Robertson proposed to deal with that by having two ballot papers, and these ballot papers, I understand, are to be on one sheet of paper perforated; but the arrangement of the names upon them is to be by lot by the returning officer, or if two candidates choose to signify their desire to run together, they can be put upon one paper. Personally I do not agree with that system at all. I think the difficulty would be great. I do not think it would be quite fair to the people themselves. I do not believe in the system of lot, nor do I think two candidates ought to be on one paper. I think it ought to be one single ballot paper for the whole election.

869. And No. 1 would be the first vote, and No. 2 the second?—No. 2 will be the second preference.

870. But in a double-member constituency, and marking like that, would not that very much approximate to the single transferable vote system?—It is a step in that direction undoubtedly. If it should be found after some experience with the alternative vote that it was capable of being extended, and wisely so extended, proportional representation might come along, and I think those who are in favour of that particular system might very well help us to get this system as an experiment first.

871. The alternative vote being a step towards the proportional representation system?—Yes; I would like to point out that I have two suggestions to make. With regard to the double-barrelled constituencies, under Mr. Robertson's Bill, as I said just now, I do not agree with his system at all. It occurs to me that there are two ways of dealing with the voting for two members. In the one case you might give the option of the voter putting the figure 1 against two persons and the figure 2 against two others. That was the first proposal—that they should each mark 1 twice over, which would give them the opportunity of voting. I

think that would probably get rid of the difficulty of the one ballot paper.

872. And then have a double second choice?—For the second choice he would be able to mark "2" twice over.

873. Mark two candidates with a figure 2?—Yes. If I might point out the way in which the alternative vote might possibly work, take the Colne Valley case, where you had a Socialist, a Liberal, and a Conservative. The Socialist polled 3,648 votes, 150 only above the Liberal and about 200 in advance of the Conservative, so that by about, roughly speaking, 30 per cent. of the electorate this gentleman was returned. Under alternative voting you would have taken out the Conservative vote, eliminating the odd figures, the 227, leaving him 3,000, and dividing those between the Socialist and the Liberal, it is not unreasonable to think that the Conservative voter would largely have preferred the Liberal to represent him than the Socialist. So that if you had given them roughly, 1,800 to the Liberal and 1,200 to the Socialist—that being the Labour vote given to him although a Socialist—the effect of that would have been to bring the Liberal up to 5,495, as against the 4,848, which would have much better represented the general state of feeling of Colne Valley than the present representation does. If I take the most recent case of Sheffield, there was a Labour and Socialist, a Conservative, a Liberal, and a second Conservative; 12,889 votes were polled in all, yet the Socialist was returned, with 27·4 per cent. of the voting, at that election. If alternative voting had taken place one of two things might have happened. If the whole Liberal vote had given the second preference to the Socialist or Labour candidate he would still have been the member, but would have received 6,706 votes, or 50 per cent. of the total poll, while the Conservative would have received the total of the two Conservative votes, making 6,183; or if there had been a division in the Liberal votes, and the Conservative votes had been accumulated upon the first Conservative, and the division of the Liberal vote had been on the same lines as that for Colne Valley—1,200 in one case and 1,800 in the other—the result would have been that the Conservative would have polled 7,983 and the Labour man would have had 4,731, and I think probably that approximated more to the feeling of the Attercliffe Division of Sheffield than the return of the Socialist with 27·4 per cent. of the electorate polling.

874. That is under the system of the alternative vote?—Yes.

875. The proportional representation system cannot be applied to a single-member constituency?—No, it must be by grouping.

876. In regard to the question of three-cornered contests, take the last election in Warwickshire. There it would hardly apply; the majority was so large that it swamped the other two?—Yes, as a matter of fact the person returned received 50 per cent. plus 1 of the total poll. It is only in cases where it is not arrived at on the first ballot that the alternative vote comes into force.

877. Taking different areas of the country where one party at present occupies all the seats, do you think that is a thing which ought to be remedied if possible. For instance, take Birmingham, returning seven Unionists, or Wales returning an entire representation of Liberals, do not you think any scheme which would redress that grievance by giving the minority in each place a chance of obtaining representation would be advisable?—That is rather a question of theory than otherwise. It is a question whether the Conservatives in Wales are not represented by the Conservatives in England. It has not that parochial line that smaller matters would have. The Conservative policy, I take it, is just as well represented by the English Conservatives as it would be by the Welsh Conservatives, but the preponderance of feeling in Wales is Liberal; it would be quite a small proportion who were Conservatives.

878. But they do not receive actually any local representation?—Quite so.

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[Continued.]

879. It is conceivable under a scheme of proportional representation that they would?—Certainly.

880. You do not think the advantage, which it must be admitted that would be, would outweigh the objections?—No, I do not think so myself.

881. The question of redistribution does not necessarily come before this inquiry, but it must be admitted that any scheme of alteration would involve redistribution?—Certainly.

882. In your view, if there was any redistribution you would recommend the abolition of the two-member seats?—Certainly, and the bringing up of the total of the electorate to, I should say myself, a minimum of 15,000, and getting rid of all the small places, or absorbing them.

883. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Do the Liberal agents in the country belong to the Liberal Central Association?—No, agents do not belong to the Liberal Central, they have an organisation of their own, and I happen to be one of their board of examiners, and I am and have been for many years a member of the Society.

884. Then you are familiar with the wishes of the country agents as well as the Metropolitan agents?—Yes, certainly. I am not speaking for the Metropolis only.

885. Have you considered, as a body—either the Metropolitan body, or the other body to which you referred—recently the question of electoral reform as a whole?—Certainly. We had a general meeting of all the agents.

886. I understand from you that as regards redistribution, your proposals would be in favour of the maintenance of single-member constituencies?—Yes.

887. And the abolition of the two-member constituencies?—Certainly.

888. And that you are opposed to a system of redistribution which would have the effect of creating more than single-member constituencies?—Yes.

889. Have you considered any other points of principle bearing on electoral reform which it would be useful to state to the Commission. For instance, to illustrate what I mean, would the agents be in favour of having all the elections on one day?—Clearly.

890. Have you anything of the same kind to suggest?—The closing of licensed houses on the same day.

891. Have they considered that?—Certainly.

892. Have they any other point?—Yes. I think as agents we are all in favour of the official costs of the election being borne either by the county or the State.

893. That question probably lies just outside our province?—Yes.

894. As I understand it, you agree that the present state of things, both as regards the constituencies themselves and the methods of electing members for such constituencies, is very imperfect?—Certainly.

895. You certainly desire to see an alteration in a system which can produce such results as in the Colne Valley and Attercliffe?—Yes.

896. The policy of yourself and your colleagues, I gather, is that of distinct representation of majorities rather than representation of minorities?—Certainly.

897. You attach much more importance to the due representation of the majority than to any representation of the minority?—Yes.

898. But, at the same time, if you apply the alternative vote for the purpose of obtaining temporarily the adequate representation of the majority, I gather that you would be prepared to use such a system as an approach towards a more elaborate system of proportional representation?—Certainly. I think if it turned out to be completely satisfactory, and the public got used to that system, it is always possible to extend it to the larger system of proportional representation.

899. But is that so if you embark on a new redistribution scheme which binds you to single-member constituencies?—I do not say in two years or five years. I am thinking of the future—considerably in the future.

900. But where is the embarking point to come?—The transferable vote is the first step, I take it. That is common to both the proportional representation and the alternative vote system.

901. Is your fear of taking the plunge into proportional representation, merely an apprehension that the elector will not understand the system?—No, my primary objection is that it is dangerous to the State in the present condition of affairs.

902. What change in condition do you anticipate?—I fear that the majority would not be either Liberal or Conservative.

903. But what change in the condition of circumstances do you anticipate is likely to occur which would make it safe to embark in a system of proportional representation if it is not safe to do so now?—That is so much in the future that I am afraid I could not give you reasons for it. One could only suppose that the party system may break down. At the present time we are ruled by the party system, which may break down entirely, and so it may become necessary to have a new system.

904. It is strictly accurate to say that we are ruled by the party system now?—In a rough-and-ready way I should say we are, certainly.

905. But you anticipate that we may become more rough and less ready at no distant date, and so you would have fresh sub-divisions of "Free Traders" and "Protectionists," and so forth?—Certainly. It is quite possible that within the course of only a few years you might possibly get a re-arrangement of parties. One can quite conceive of the uprising of one particular element, which at the present time is small, causing a combination of other parties and the formation of two other dividing parties.

906. And as the party system breaks down you would be disposed to welcome the introduction of proportional representation?—I think it would be necessary then.

907. The only question in your mind is as to the psychological moment at which the new departure may be made?—I am certain about one thing—that this is not the psychological moment.

908. You want to see one more Registration or Redistribution Bill passed dealing with one-member constituencies, and stand on the brink until there is a second?—Of course, taking together with it the alternative vote—redistribution and the alternative vote.

909. Now tell me something about the alternative vote. How does the voter mark his ballot paper?—Supposing you had three persons standing as candidates, he would mark "1" against the person he most desired to be returned. He would then mark "2" against the person he would desire to have if the first preference failed. Then the whole of the first preferences would be counted first, and if upon that a candidate had 50 per cent. plus 1 he would be returned, of course.

910. But if you had a plethora of candidates standing for a one-member constituency, would a man be at liberty to mark 1, 2, 3, or must he confine it to 1, 2?—I think I should be rather inclined, myself—I do not think everybody would agree with me—to allow him to mark the whole order of preference. Supposing there were five candidates, I think I should allow him to mark 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

911. So far as the voter was concerned, under the system of alternative votes he would be in no less complicated a position than under the system of proportional representation?—He would, for this reason, that it would not be compulsory upon him, or really necessary for him, to mark five figures against five names.

912. But is not that equally true of proportional representation?—Of course it depends upon the system. The Belgian system, as I understand it, is by lists, and I daresay there it is not a difficult thing to put a tick across the little mark that represents the whole list—I think that is possible. But I do not think we should agree in this country to have it formed in that way on a list system.

913. But you are familiar with the other system, what is known as the system of the Proportional Representation Society, which is that of a transferable vote?—Yes.

914. There a voter exercises his preference by putting 2, 3, 4, and 5?—That is true.

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[Continued.]

915. Which is what he would do, as I understand it, in the case of the alternative vote?—He might, certainly, if he chose.

916. In neither case need he exercise the preference right up to the hilt?—Perhaps not. I think it might be optional, certainly. He might mark 1, 2, and 3, or 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

917. So that as between the alternative vote and proportional representation there is nothing to choose as affecting the intelligence of the elector?—I should be sorry to say the elector was not intelligent.

918. As affecting the ability of the elector?—Yes. I do not think there is so much in that as in my other points. I think there is a difficulty in this way: Whereas for a single-member constituency you could hardly conceive of more than four or five persons standing, where you have a group of constituencies with 60,000 to 100,000 electors the chances are that you would have 15, 20, or perhaps even more, on the ballot paper to vote for, which would increase the difficulty of the marking.

919. I was just going to bring you to that very point. The parting of the ways seems to me to be simply this: You would adhere to the single-member constituency, giving the elector the right to vote alternatively. Those who take a modest view of proportional representation, would be content to take three or five-member constituencies, giving the elector the same right of preference. If you felt assured that the constituencies would not run beyond three or five, I take it it would modify your opinion?—I think not, because, supposing it was limited to three members, you could hardly conceive of that being less than 50,000 electors, and that would be too large an area and too large an electorate to deal with. My objection would be just the same to the combination of three as it would be to five or six.

920. You know a very strong opinion has been expressed before us in favour of the maintenance of historical associations as evidenced by a particular area?—Yes.

921. Do you think there is anything in that?—I am afraid it is more sentimental than practical.

922. Do you think it is equally good to divide Liverpool into districts, and have a Labour man sitting for one district and an Irishman representing the Irish vote in another, and a Conservative in a third?—I should prefer that.

923. But on the whole question, as I understand it, you are quite prepared to make a departure in the direction of proportional representation at the moment when the party system would not be unduly affected?—I think when the present party system breaks down, would possibly be the psychological moment for the other advance.

924. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) You say you think your personal views against proportional representation are shared by Liberal agents throughout the country?—Yes.

925. Would you say there is any difference of opinion between Liberal and Conservative agents on that point?—I am sorry that my knowledge of the Conservative agents is very limited. I only know a few individuals. I do not know them as a body. But I am in constant touch with the Liberal agents. We have frequent meetings, and as one of their representatives on their board of management, I am in touch with all.

926. And they are clearly against proportional representation, even with comparatively small constituencies of three members?—Yes, I think I might say that.

927. I think you said you wished to abolish the present two-member constituencies?—Yes.

928. What are the reasons for that?—I think myself the general trend of public opinion is against it. The party, at all events, is in favour of single-member constituencies, and difficulties frequently arise by having two members to elect for one place. Occasionally I know the effect is to get a Liberal and a Conservative, and in that sense the two parties are well represented, but I think the general feeling is against it, because of the desire for the single-member constituency as against the double-member constituency. I do not know why

double-member constituencies were retained, and I never could understand why.

929. You do not think any system of lists would answer in England such as they have in Belgium or Switzerland?—I think not.

930. What do you think is the reason why it succeeds in Belgium and Switzerland, and would not succeed in England?—I do not know sufficiently about Switzerland or Belgium to give an opinion perhaps, but what strikes me is that their system of parties is quite different to ours. Our system of parties, as I take it, is divided by distinct policies between two parties, both of them desiring to do what is right for the whole country, but for other things having distinct policies to work upon. I understand in Belgium it is largely dominated by religious feeling and by other minor matters which do not appeal to us in this country.

931. Is this system of alternative voting which you advocate actually in force anywhere?—I am not sure but I rather think it is in force in Australia.

932. I have heard it said that it would be opposed by the Labour Party, on the ground that Labour candidates would be usually cut out by it. Do you think that is true?—I think it might probably have some effect upon them in some cases where they have no right to expect to be returned. I do not think it would affect a constituency where it is made up almost entirely of labour, where the thing which ought to happen would be that the Labour man should be returned. It certainly would affect them where they choose to cut in and destroy the chances of the man who ought probably to be returned, because he has the major portion of opinion in his favour, whether it be Liberal or Conservative—it would certainly affect them in those cases.

933. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) You lay great stress on the majority in Parliament being strong?—I do. I think I must modify that a little. I believe in party government by majority, but as a matter of fact too large a majority is not always a thing to be desired.

934. We were told yesterday that the Belgian Parliament could work with a majority of 10. You would not regard that as a working majority for England, would you?—No, I should not.

935. The next important point in your mind, I take it, is that the best class of man should form part of that majority?—Certainly.

936. You condemn the proportional representation system on the ground that it weakens the number of the majority and the quality also?—Certainly.

937. You think we should have small groups that would be pledged to certain interests?—Certainly.

938. Supposing that a big town like Birmingham was a single constituency, and you, as a party agent, were making up your list of members to stand there, do you think any party agent would tend to include special members to catch the special votes of the Church or Nonconformists, or liquor trade, or so on, under proportional representation?—I should think probably.

939. So you think the result would be that you would get returned to Parliament men pledged to special interests which were not the national interests?—Quite so.

940. Though you would thus represent all the minorities in the country they would be minorities that stood for their own particular business, and not for the national interest?—Undoubtedly. I might put it in another way: the effect to my mind would be that the number of bores and cranks in the House would be largely increased, apart from the personal interests of trade or religion.

941. Your system of the alternative vote and single-member constituencies, though it secures the representation of the majority, does not correct the effects of our system in that a large majority that is scattered over several constituencies is unrepresented. Take Wales for instance: the alternative vote in Wales would not have affected the solid Liberal membership for Wales at the last election?—No.

942. It secures that the member who sits for a special seat is the majority member and not a minority member?—Certainly.

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[Continued.]

943. How in a constituency do you apply the alternative vote? I followed very clearly your lucid description of the single-member constituency at Attercliffe, but I do not see how you apply it to a two-member constituency?—A two-member constituency could be worked on the plan Mr. Robertson laid down in his Bill.

944. I do not think I quite follow that?—It is this: The persons when nominated shall be divided into two lists, the returning officer is to be the person who allocates the names to the two lists. He does that under the Bill by lot; but always provided that any two candidates may notify to him when they give in their nomination papers that they desire to be put together upon one of those two lists. Then the two lists are put upon one ballot paper sheet, but perforated so that it makes it into two ballot papers; and the person voting under the scheme marks his papers with the figures 1 and 2 against any of those persons on those two lists.

945. He puts two 1's and two 2's?—No, that is what I suggest should be done. If I may read the section, it says: "Two lists of candidates shall be printed separately on a ballot paper, and may be divided by a perforated line. A list may be headed by the words: 'First Seat' or 'Second Seat,' or other like title. A voter may give one and shall not give more than one effective vote on each list in the same manner as if that list were a separate ballot paper."

946. I read that as meaning that you could mark each list with a first choice?—I do not think it means that. I did not read it to mean that.

947. Taking the case of a Liberal voter and two Liberal candidates, he cannot give a first preference to each Liberal candidate; all he can do is to mark them "1" and "2"?—That is what I think it means. I am not quite clear about it, but I suggest he should be able to give a first preference to two candidates.

948. Assuming, then, you have two lists, he marks each list from 1 to 5, or whatever the number is on that list?—Yes.

949. Then to be returned the man must get a third of the votes plus 1?—Yes.

950. And when he does not, you start from the bottom and distribute up in the same way as in the single-member constituency?—Yes.

951. To how big a constituency will that system apply?—I do not think there would necessarily be any limit to the numbers within reason. I do not say 50,000, or anything of that kind, but I should think with anything up to 25,000 it would be quite easy.

952. I take it the only difference in a big constituency between the alternative vote system and the single transferable vote is that you do not distribute the majorities of votes at the top of the list—you leave those as they are?—In the single transferable vote system I understand, if the person does not receive a certain proportion the other preferences are marked upon his list. That principle applies to the alternative vote.

953. In the case of the single transferable vote you start at the head of the list, and in the case of all those that have got more than the quota you distribute the excess to their second and third choices?—Yes, that is so.

954. That process does not take place under the alternative vote?—No. In the other case to get what is called the quota you divide it up by the number of candidates, plus 1.

955. Yes. Then, as soon as you come to big constituencies with more than two members, the single transferable vote is a fairer way of getting at the wishes of the electorate than the alternative vote. My point is rather this, that in the single-member constituency, I agree with you, it does cause the majority to return their member, but if you get to two and more member constituencies it is not such a fair method as the single transferable vote?—That is possible.

956. In your opinion you would abolish the two-member constituencies, and you would have the single-member constituency and apply the alternative vote?—Certainly.

957. If you had the single transferable vote in counties, and a five-member constituency, no candidate on earth could go all round and speak at all the villages and all the places?—It would be impossible.

958. It is the case at present that some candidates spend a large part of the year in village meetings?—Yes, they do. You constantly find an ordinary county constituency with anything between 60 and 150 villages widely distributed, and with no means of communication except by road. If you multiply that by 3 to 5, it would be absolutely impossible—a man could never attend Parliament, or when once elected could never go down again.

959. Therefore, organisation would count for more than it does now, I take it. The best organised party that mapped out the area of each candidate would be in a better position than a less organised party?—Yes.

960. Do you think the independent member would have more chance under a proportional system over the whole area of Parliament than he has now?—An independent member would get a chance, no doubt, under the proportional representation system which he does not get under the present system or under the alternative vote.

961. You do not think a large number of single-member constituencies in reality will give a chance for all classes of independent members?—No. I think the person returned for his party does represent, as a rule, the various shades of opinion; that is to say, you will get in a commercial centre the commercial man who represents commercial opinion. In another place you will get a case where the man, although a Liberal, represents the Labour view, and so for that purpose in the House represents Labour, although not returned as a Labour member or Socialist.

962. So you think the House of Commons is representative of all minorities?—Certainly.

963. There are temperance members in large numbers, and there is an anti-vaccinationist, as a matter of fact?—You even get that, but my difficulty with regard to the smaller groups would be that the person would go there, not to represent party or Government in any phase, but, say, anti-vaccination.

964. The smaller parties like the Socialist or Labour parties, you said would oppose the alternative vote?—It was put to me that they did. I think it is possible that they might. I have not said they do. I do not know.

965. I should think they would under present conditions?—I think it is probable.

966. But still in the end, as they got solidified and organised, it would be as fair to them as the big parties?—Certainly.

967. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) I think you said in the earlier part of your evidence you were in favour, and you believed your colleagues were in favour of holding all the elections on one day?—Certainly.

968. You are of opinion that the objections which are often raised as to the staffing of so many elections on one day are not insuperable?—Certainly not insuperable.

969. Supposing a system of proportional representation were adopted, and you still had the elections on one day, would it make any material difference in the ease of staffing such elections?—I do not think myself it would make much difference. I believe the real reason of the objection raised by officials to having elections on one day is that the returning officer for a county likes to take round to each division his one set of men. He takes them round from place to place, and so fixes his day that he may take them all in. It would be equally possible for the returning officer for a particular division of the county to have his own staff for that purpose, only without the other system of taking a body of men from division to division. I do not think it would make much difference one way or the other.

970. You criticised certain provisions of Mr. Robertson's Bill. Have you seen Mr. Dundas White's Bill?—I am sorry I have not.

971. I think you said in answer to a question put by the Chairman, that in a rough-and-ready way minorities do get representation now?—Yes.

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[Continued.]

972. Could you imagine for one moment that you were a Conservative in the Colne Valley district. Under the present system you would have no direct representation, nor would you have any direct representation if there was a system of alternative voting?—Quite so.

973. But you do not think you would be deserving of public sympathy on that ground?—I think I should be represented by some other Conservative in some other place, and I should have my fair share of representation in the House of Commons.

974. Let us suppose that the political complexion of such a constituency is permanent, and let us suppose that there is a considerable minority in the constituency which agrees with you in political opinion, and you are a member of that minority. Whereas, permanently, a Liberal in that constituency would have representation, you, because you were a Conservative, would have to seek your representation outside the influence of your own vote?—Certainly.

975. You do not consider that that is a matter which ought to earn you the sympathy of politicians?—Sympathy, no doubt; but I do not see the necessity to alter the system. I am sorry the gentleman has not a representation, but somebody else is in the House who does represent his opinions. I put it in this way: In the common actions of life majorities always rule. No matter how small the body of men that gets together may be, a majority of one must carry the result. So in the constituency that you are speaking of, if the Conservative party in the Colne Valley can give good reason to show why the other electors who were not at the present time in their party should join them, they will then become the majority and the Liberal party must go to the bottom.

976. But the fact that the Conservatives are in a minority in the Colne Valley may be simply because of the size and position of the constituency. It is quite possible that the Conservatives in a particular county might be in a majority although not so in a particular division of that county?—Certainly.

977. But that would not influence you in deciding against larger constituencies?—No, I am afraid it would not.

978. What considerations determine the selection of candidates at present? It is quite obvious from the answers you gave to Mr. Hills that in your opinion under a system of larger constituencies, and many membered constituencies, local candidates would be the only candidates who would have any chance of becoming elected, because it would be impossible for any other candidate to cover the ground?—Quite so.

979. How far is that objection in existence now? Do you think local candidates have a very big pull over others?—They must necessarily have some advantage, because they have not to make themselves known, whereas the stranger who comes down has to. But it does not always work to their advantage. Sometimes in the case of a local man they know too much about him.

980. It certainly is not impossible for a stranger to get in for such a division?—No.

981. Do you think you can possibly say that there is much interest taken in this discussion in the country, either as to proportional representation or alternative vote? Do you find that in going about England or Scotland there is a great demand among people interested in electioneering for an alteration in the present system?—Yes, undoubtedly; but proportional representation is a matter scarcely ever talked about. The ordinary talk amongst the Liberal workers is: "Let us have the second ballot." Now second ballot means to their minds, not necessarily the second ballot as we know it in other countries, but some system by means of which we shall bring it down to a majority for somebody. In that way I suggest that the alternative vote is a second ballot, and covers the ground that these people are demanding. There is a constant cry for: "Let us have a second ballot. Why should we be represented by a minority?" and so on.

982. When the Liberal agents met and discussed these questions, was anything said about the hours of polling?—I cannot carry my memory back, but the

extension of the hours of polling has usually been asked for by agents, but I have forgotten whether we had any resolution upon the subject. I do not think we did as a matter of fact. I think I may say that we are all in favour of some extension of the hours of polling.

983. You do not think the hours are long enough at present?—No. In urban constituencies, where the person works away from his home or largely so, 8 o'clock is too early. I can say that with considerable emphasis, because I was agent for the bye-election in Walthamstow in 1897, and I was the agent for Walthamstow for the last election, and I took part in the one before that in 1900. A very large number of people were excluded from the poll because the trains they came down by from town from their work did not reach Walthamstow until after the hour of 8. If it had been extended until 9 o'clock they would have been able to record their votes. Moreover, those who got down a little earlier got to the polling station in such numbers that they could not all be admitted, and they formed a queue outside of about 150 people in one place I went to, many of whom did not get in at all, and so there were many hundreds who did not vote on that occasion. Nine o'clock would have covered it.

984. I think I have occasionally heard it suggested that if you had all the elections on one day, that day might be a public holiday. Would that get over the difficulty?—Yes, undoubtedly.

985. In effect, I gather you are not opposed eventually to the institution of proportional representation, but you think, so far as the elector is concerned, from the present system of merely marking his ballot paper with a \times , proportional representation is too sudden a change, and you would like to see the alternative vote as a preparatory step?—I think that is going a little farther than I intended. I am not myself in favour of proportional representation as generally understood, but I say that if you get your first step of the alternative vote, and it proved to be successful, it would give you a stronger ground for advancing to the other position.

986. In other words, although you are not in a position to assist those who desire proportional representation, you see no reason why those who desire proportional representation should not assist you to get your alternative vote?—Certainly. May I put it still further on another point altogether? I should not have any objection myself to proportional representation being tried for local elections—municipal purposes—and the feeling I have about it is this: there you are only dealing with an administrative body; here you are dealing with a legislative body; and I think the two functions are distinct, and at present I do not see my way to say they are both to be dealt with in the same way.

987. Have you had experience of rural as well as urban constituencies?—Yes.

988. You do not think it would be possible to adapt proportional representation to urban constituencies sooner or easier than to rural constituencies. You do not think it possible to have a separate treatment for the two kinds of constituency?—I do not believe in separate treatment for the two classes of constituencies, although I quite admit that the possibility of intelligent understanding of the system is greater in the urban district than it would be in the rural district.

989. Because the rural elector, although not less intelligent, is less flexible, less adaptable?—Yes, less adaptable.

990. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You stated certain objections to the second ballot system. Have you considered as an additional one, the question of multiplying candidates and the fact that if you had a second ballot law it would tempt additional candidates probably to stand at the first ballot?—That would be so, probably it would increase the number of candidates.

991. If it did that, do you think that when the process of bargaining, which would probably take place, between the first and second ballot, got into operation, that an element of resentment or spite might influence votes at the second ballot?—I go further than that. I agree it would be, but I am afraid there would also be corruption.

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[Continued.]

992. You speak of the use of the alternative vote as being quite optional and not compulsory?—Yes.

993. Have you studied at all, or heard at all, of the working of what is an alternative vote, namely, the contingent vote in the Colony of Queensland?—Only in a general way. It was in my mind just now.

994. You are aware it is optional there?—Yes.

995. Have you ever heard that there are politicians, political leaders there, who are strongly in favour of making it compulsory?—No, I have not heard that. Do you mean by "compulsory," a compulsory vote of the individual or a compulsory marking of the preference?

996. A compulsory use of his preference, otherwise it invalidates the ballot paper if he does not use it. The chief reason why the making it compulsory is advocated bears upon something you have said about the Labour party and minor parties here. I think you indicated that you thought they might oppose the alternative vote?—I think it is quite possible.

997. Are you aware that in Queensland the Labour party issues instructions to its voters not to use the alternative vote, but simply to give one vote for the Labour man? Supposing you had that done here by, say, the Labour party, determining that none of their voters should give any assistance to any other candidate at all, would not that largely defeat the object of the alternative vote?—I am not sure, but I should rather think it would mean the wiping out of the Labour party. It would probably mean, then, a combination. If the Labour man came out top on the first No. 1's the chances are the others would make up their minds certainly not to give him any chance, and would give their second preference to one of the other parties even.

998. But I assume, from the experience of the Colonies, that they prefer the risk of the occasional loss of a seat in order to keep their people solid and irreconcilable against the other parties?—That might be possible here.

999. Then would it not be better to make the use of the preference mark absolutely compulsory?—Certainly, I should be in favour of that.

1000. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) What would be the penalty?—Loss of the vote. The paper would be invalidated if the man had not expressed a preference.

1001. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You referred just now to Mr. Robertson's Bill, and to the question of dealing with double constituencies where you would have two candidates, and the alternative vote, and I gather from what you said that you would be in favour of a man being allowed to mark "1," "1," and "2," "2"?—That was in my mind, certainly.

1002. Supposing a man did that, and one of his "1" marked men was returned, which of his two 2's would be employed? You would not give him the chance of making some use of three votes, so only one of his No. 2's is used, supposing No. 1 were returned straight off?—I do not know, I can see difficulties.

1003. That is what occurs to me if you allow him to mark two 2's?—Yes.

1004. (*Chairman.*) Could not you give the next preference to his other "1" mark? If one of his candidates which he marks first gets in, surely his next preference would be the other candidate he has marked "1"?—It requires some thinking out. There is another method in a two-member constituency. It is quite possible that where there are, say, five or more candidates, the votes for the fifth and sixth would be transferred to the first, second, third, or fourth, and so the two highest would be elected. Probably on the whole that would be better than putting two 1's and two 2's.

1005. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) That is really what I am driving at. You are against large districts altogether?—Yes, and against small ones. I want them intermediate.

1006. You think the large districts are unworkable?—I think so.

1007. I did not gather your reasons altogether, but one of the reasons given was that it would be impossible

for a candidate to nurse the small centres and go round and speak at every little village, and so forth?—I would not care to use the word "nurse." I would say "make his opinions known."

1008. We will say "attend to" not "nurse," then. If that were made impossible would it be any great national loss?—I think the personal element in this country is one element at all events of representation. The question of a man's character, his capability of representing the district, and other things, are elements towards his election.

1009. But is not that rather a question of getting a strong local character, like the man who has just won at Stratford-on-Avon, who is well known in the district?—No doubt a local candidate always has first pull.

1010. But the question of driving round in a motor to all the little petty centres of the place, and making speeches, does not enable the electors to judge of his character very much?—That is quite true, I admit that, but after all is said and done, it is not altogether the business of a candidate to run round in a motor and address a meeting for half an hour and bolt off again. My ideal candidate is a man who gets really into personal touch with the people he comes into contact with at the meetings. I would not like a candidate, if I were running a candidate, to come down and fire off a speech in half an hour and bolt. I would make him talk to the people and stay all night at the village if possible.

1011. You strongly intimated to us that you thought a solid majority was necessary to a Government in the House of Commons?—Yes. I do not mean a majority of 200, or anything of that kind.

1012. Not a vast one, but a solid one?—A workable majority. I do not know that I am the person who ought to say; but what runs through my mind is a majority of anything between 30 and 40.

1013. You indicated that you thought under the present system minorities really are directly or indirectly represented?—I think they are.

1014. Do you think they are, roughly, proportionately represented?—Yes, I think they are even that.

1015. The working class of the United Kingdom tends more and more to segregate itself politically into some sort of party or group, not necessarily in Parliament at present, but outside. The working people of the country tend to a certain solidarity now politically?—I should say it has advanced in a very small degree. I have always said that the working class, if they chose to be one party, could practically rule the State, but there is the fact that a very large proportion of the working class vote Conservative. I do not pretend to explain that. Then, on the other hand, a good many of them now probably go over to the Socialist body in the hope of getting some benefit by an amalgamation of that sort, but I think the Socialist element, if I may say so, with great deference to them, is fairly well represented in the House of Commons.

1016. Do you think the working class, as a class—and they are a class holding to a certain extent separate views—and are tending more and more to hold separate views—can be said to be at all adequately represented now?—But I do not think that the premiss is quite right. I do not think at the present time that is so. The tendency of the working class is still, as it always has been, to be Liberal or Conservative, with a breaking off here and there in certain districts of persons who are discontented with both sides, and who join themselves to what they call Socialists. That is general.

1017. Do you think if opportunities were given under a proportional representation system to break off in a much more effectual way than they do now that they would take advantage of it to any extent?—I am afraid I could not give you an answer to that.

1018. I mean do you think that proportional representation would tend to lead to the enlarging of a great Labour group?—It is quite possible, but I should not like to give a very definite answer to it; I have not thought it over.

The witness withdrew.

SEVENTH DAY.

Thursday, 13th May 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
 The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
 Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
 Sir COURTENAY LBBET, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
 LL.D., D.C.L.
 The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
 Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Mr. J. DUNDAS WHITE, M.P., called and examined.

1019. (*Chairman*.) Last year you introduced a Bill into the House of Commons dealing with electoral matters?—Yes.

1020. I gather from that that you consider the present system is not quite satisfactory?—I consider it far from perfect.

1021. And you think there is great room for improvement?—Yes.

1022. The Bill that you have drawn up is in the direction of the alternative vote?—Yes.

1023. The objections you have to the present system are that it is possible, where more than two candidates stand for one constituency, that the actual result may not be in accordance with the views of the majority of the electors?—The representative may be returned by an actual minority. That of itself has obvious disadvantages, because it is not true representation, and it has a further disadvantage that I think I can best show by quoting the words that Mr. Winston Churchill used at Manchester on the 18th October 1906, if I may just read them to the Commission. He said: "There was an electoral difficulty to which no one could be blind. A party which wished to put its views before the nation found that the running of a candidate at an election was the best way of obtaining public notice, and yet the running of their candidate might have exactly the opposite effect to that which the party honestly desired to produce. The election might result not in the return of the candidate they wished to return, nor in the return of the candidate who most nearly agreed with them, but in the return of a candidate to whom they were diametrically opposed. That was evidently a muddle, and it ought to be quite easy to put it right."

1024. He did not indicate any preference for any scheme?—No, but personally he thought the best way of putting it right was by the second ballot. I would say a word to justify the ordinary suggestion of the second ballot. I put this forward, as indeed the whole thing, entirely irrespective of any party considerations, because the same thing might work *mutatis mutandis* whatever were the circumstances.

1025. With reference to the second ballot, what do you say?—In the ordinary way that is of course the simplest and the crudest scheme, but I would sum up the objections in this way: In the first place, it would duplicate a great deal of the work and the expense. In the second place, it would harass the elector by multiplying elections, having one after another. Thirdly, at the second ballot there would be a very much smaller poll than there had been at the first, and the electoral interest would be largely decreased. Fourthly—and this is to my mind a very important objection—in view of the increasing number of candidates, in some cases it would not suffice if there were more than three candidates. I have put down, as an instance, the case of the Edinburgh Central Division in 1885. In that case there were four candidates for the one seat. One candidate obtained 2,930 votes; the next 1,683, the next one 1,606, and the next 770. The Commission will observe that in this case the successful candidate did not obtain a majority of the whole votes. Consequently, the second ballot would come in, but if

you have the second ballot simply as between the first and second candidates, you would exclude two candidates whose combined votes aggregated more than the votes of the second candidate. So if the principle of the second ballot were to be applied throughout in a case like this, there should be a second ballot to decide which should be cut out, and which two should be left in, and then as between these two there should be a third ballot to see which would obtain the majority of votes; because if you do not do that, you are eliminating votes which aggregate more than the votes of one of the candidates who is left in. Of course, it is quite possible that might be carried a stage further, but to have a succession of three ballots, or possibly four ballots, would be manifestly unworkable, or at least so it seems to me. I should mention the very recent case of the Attercliffe contest, in which Mr. Pointer received 3,531 votes, Mr. King Farlow 3,380, Mr. Lambert 3,175, and Mr. Muir Wilson 2,803. That is a still stronger case of even more direct equalities between four candidates.

1026. The two latter there exceeded the second in the same way?—The two latter exceeded the second, and they also exceeded the first. Between them they aggregated nearly 6,000 votes, whereas the first only got 3,500.

1027. In countries where the second ballot is in operation, does this difficulty often occur?—I am afraid I have not sufficient knowledge of that to say.

1028. It seems to me a very likely one to happen?—I think it not only a likely one, but an increasingly likely one, while it seems to me that multiplication of ballots would be unworkable. The transferable vote system, with which everyone is familiar, would secure all the results truly on a single voting operation; that is to say at a single poll, however many candidates there might be. As regards the form in which that should be brought in, I have here Mr. Robertson's Parliamentary Elections Bill that was introduced in 1906. That, I think, may be taken as generally descriptive of it; and, if I may be allowed to say so, I think as a draft it leaves very little to be desired. But it is not of general application. It applies only to the case of elections for a single member. That, of course, may be in a single-member constituency or at a bye-election in a double-member constituency. The difficulty of two-member elections was felt, and Mr. Robertson, Mr. Dunn, and myself all brought in Bills in 1908 designed to deal with that. I have made some notes with reference to those Bills, and perhaps I might just run through them.

1029. (*Sir Francis Hopwood*.) This system which you are speaking of is called the alternative vote rather than the transferable vote?—I should perhaps use the words "alternative vote." I really use the two terms as interchangeable. It is described as a transferable vote in Lord Avebury's book on representation published about 20 years ago. I should say that the alternative vote is the more modern phrase.

1030. (*Chairman*.) It seems to me that the phrase "alternative vote" is used when applied to a single-member constituency, and the phrase "transferable vote" is used when applied to a constituency of three, four, or more members?—Then I would substitute that

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phrase "alternative vote" for the phrase "transferable vote." In the case of two-member elections, the difficulty arises in applying that principle to two votes, and also there is the further difficulty that in a two-member election, if you have as I suggest only one alternative vote for each elector, you may under certain circumstances require to redistribute down instead of only redistributing up; in other words, you may have surplus votes to deal with which does not arise in the case of a single-member election. This is the proposal, roughly speaking, in Mr. Robertson's Bill, because it is a development of his previous Bill, and I think we may take it first.

1031. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Is Mr. Robertson's Bill of 1906 identical with his Bill of 1908?—No. Mr. Robertson is here, and I speak with diffidence about his Bills, because he can speak so much better about them himself, but the distinguishing feature of the second Bill is that it covers the case of two-member elections as well as of one-member elections.

1032. (*Lord Lochee.*) So does yours?—So does mine, and so also Mr. Dunn's.

1033. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The Bill of 1906 dealt only with single-member constituencies?—Yes.

1034. And each of the Bills of 1908 dealt also with two-member constituencies?—Yes.

1035. (*Chairman.*) The system of the two lists is the distinguishing feature of Mr. Robertson's Bill?—His distinguishing feature is that in two-member constituencies each elector should retain his two votes as at present, and that there should be two lists of candidates, the names of some candidates being in one list and the names of the other candidates being in the other. I put that point because that is where the system differs from Mr. Dunn's system—there are two lists, and two lists comprising different candidates. One great difficulty, and I admit a fundamental difficulty, seems to me to be the question of how the names of the candidates are to be allotted as between the two lists, because if there was a very strong candidate who would be certain to carry the seat, everyone else would want to be in the other list. The problem of how they should be allocated between the lists is a very difficult one.

1036. (*Lord Lochee.*) Your Bill does not propose a list?—It does not propose two lists. I only propose a single list. Mr. Robertson's suggestion of dealing with that difficulty—I hope he will correct me if I am wrong—is in Clause 6, sub-section (3), of his Parliamentary Elections Bill, No. 74 of 1908: "The returning officer shall determine by lot on which list each name shall appear." Now it seems to me, for the reasons I have stated, that that is far too important a consideration to leave to lot. It seems to me to give too much to chance, because after all if the lot went in such a way that a candidate was placed in the same list as a very strong candidate he might as well withdraw from the contest at once. I recognise there are modifications as to the various candidates making mutual arrangements, but then again that by no means gets over the fundamental difficulty, and it may raise new difficulties of its own, because it is important, as far as possible, to keep elections apart from arrangements as between different classes of candidates who are in for election. I am not saying that this may not be the best Bill of the three. I am only pointing out what appear to me to be very serious objections. I will pass now to Mr. Dunn's Ballot Act, No. 50 of the same year. He adopts, roughly speaking, the same general principle for single-member elections as for two-member elections. His system, speaking generally, is that the ballot paper should have a series of similar lists with the names of the same candidates. For instance, take a single-member election; assume that you have four candidates; the ballot paper should contain three similar lists. The first choice should be by putting a cross against the first choice candidate in the top list; the second choice should be indicated by a cross against a second choice candidate in the second list, and so on. The other details are to work out in the same way by applying a similar principle where there are two votes.

1037. (*Chairman.*) In a double-member constituency?—In the case of a two-member election, applying the same principle of having a series of similar lists. Speaking

generally, the objection to that seems to me to be that it would be far too complicated for the elector. I think the elector would get bewildered very quickly in a thing of that sort.

1038. And clearly the counting would be a considerable difficulty too?—Yes, but at the same time I do not attribute so much difficulty to that because, if there is complication, I would prefer to let the complication be dealt with by the enumerators who are skilled at the work, rather than by the elector who is not, and who is pretty often, or sometimes, bewildered with the papers as they are. The third Bill, about which I would like to say a word, is my own. So far as a single-member election is concerned, I am entirely on Mr. Robertson's lines. I frankly adopt them. So far as the two-member election is concerned I have rather dealt with it on the principle of proportional representation. I suggest that for a two-member election as for a one-member election there should be one single list of candidates; that the elector should mark 1, 2, 3, and 4, and so on, just in the same way as if it were a single-member election, but with this important difference—that in order to elect two candidates, the quota, instead of being half plus 1, should be one-third plus 1 of the votes that count.

1039. That is practically the same as Lord Courtney's transferable vote?—Yes, it is practically the same except with the difference I would just like to point out. In the proposals for the transferable vote what is proposed to be transferred is the actual voting paper, and difficulties may arise, because to some extent there must, even with all the modern modifications, be some sort of selection, it may be by chance, of the actual ballot papers that are to be transferred. In this case, however, apart from a detail I need not mention, there would be only one transfer down of surplus votes. The result is that you would not have to transfer packets of voting papers at all, but you would simply have to transfer a certain proportion of the votes. Suppose this were in operation. Suppose an election for two members took place under it; there are three things which might happen on the first count. Two of the candidates might each obtain a quota, and in that case, of course, they would both be elected and no difficulty would arise; in the second place, no candidate might obtain a quota and in that case there would be no difficulty, because the procedure would be the same as in a single-member election, that is, you would simply transfer up the votes of the lowest candidate until some one candidate got the quota and then you would put him aside and continue the process until some other candidate got his quota too. The difficulty arises in the third alternative of one candidate getting more than the quota and no other candidate getting the quota, because in that case you would have to begin by distributing down the surplus votes of the candidate who had the surplus votes. My suggestion is that these should be distributed down in proportion to the second choice over the whole of the votes of that candidate. That, of course, would necessitate a general recount of his votes, and I therefore frankly say, although there seems to be something for the system, it seems so very complicated that while I put it forward it is hardly a system I should feel justified in pressing.

1040. You say it is essential to transfer down. Why would not it be possible to begin with the lowest members on the list and transfer their votes first before you begin to transfer down?—Before answering that question I would like to make a qualification with which the Commission is familiar, that it would not be necessary to transfer down if the surplus were less than the difference between the two lowest candidates. That I believe is put forward by Lord Courtney in the ordinary proposals, and that of course would apply here. Now to answer the Chairman's question: If you begin by transferring up the results might be very different, and it is possible, I think, that a candidate would obtain a quota who would not obtain a quota if the process began by transferring down. Take this case: Supposing there were two candidates for party A, supposing there were two candidates for party B, and supposing there was one candidate for party C, and supposing that party A was in an enormous majority and that their favourite candidate had such a surplus that his votes, with the votes of the man who was running with him,

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would suffice to give them both a quota, or rather, if I may simplify what I have said, assuming that two candidates were running together and that their joint votes would be sufficient to give them each a quota, the votes might be put on the favourite to such an extent that the man who was running with him might get very few votes, and might be placed at the very bottom of the list. The result would be if you began by transferring up you might begin by excluding the very man who, if the surplus votes were taken into account, might get at once returned.

1041. But it would have to be a definite rule. You would not allow it to be optional?—No. I think if one were to go on the principle embodied in my Bill the rule would have to be applied as generally as in any other case of proportional representation voting. I have considered these three Bills very carefully. Of course I have only mentioned their more outstanding features. I cannot say that any of them seem to me very suitable, because the difficulties that they involve seem to be very considerable. That naturally brings one to the question of considering whether two-member constituencies are sufficiently numerous to require special treatment, and if they require special treatment, how they should be dealt with. My general suggestion is that two-member constituencies should be split up, say, in the same way as Aberdeen, which returns two members, and which is already divided into North Aberdeen and South Aberdeen, and in the same way as the London Boroughs are at present divided. I have made out a list of the undivided two-member constituencies. I have taken it from the Annual Return of Parliamentary Constituencies. England: Bath, Blackburn, Bolton, Brighton, Derby, Devonport, Halifax, Ipswich, Leicester, London (City), Newcastle-on-Tyne, Northampton, Norwich, Oldham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Preston, Southampton, Stockport, Sunderland, York, Merthyr Tydfil, Oxford University, Cambridge University. Scotland: Dundee. Ireland: Cork, Dublin University.

1042. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) Why would you split up Oxford University and Cambridge University?—I am proposing to deal with the Universities in a moment. Of these 27 constituencies it will be observed three are University constituencies. Just to deal with the point raised I may say that, in the first place, I am not in favour of the special University representation; and in the second place, even apart from that question, I do not think the difficulty that I have mentioned would arise in any case in the case of the Universities, because, if I may so put it, the contests in the Universities are not sufficiently close to give rise to the difficulties that have been mentioned. I think it highly probable, as far as we can look ahead, that in any of the Universities two of the candidates would get the quota. I would like, if I may, to speak of one or two of the general disadvantages of a two-member constituency as such. It accentuates the evils of the present system, because in fact there is very little cross voting.

1043. (Lord Lochee.) Do you call the fact that there is no cross voting an evil?—No, I do not consider the absence of cross voting an evil by any means, but I was going on to say that the evil that I do refer to is the evil of the minority not being represented—the evil against which proportional representation is directed—and that evil is even worse in two-member constituencies than in one-member constituencies because of the very small amount of cross voting. If you were to take, for instance, some of the typical two-member constituencies where the parties are evenly balanced, it often happens that if that constituency were split into two constituencies, the parties being evenly balanced, one party would have a majority in one of the constituencies and the other party would have a majority in the other. By lumping the constituency together, however, the slight majority on the whole is the majority which suffices to capture both seats, and that is what I refer to when I speak of accentuating that evil. How little cross voting there is I think is a matter that will be generally admitted. In Plymouth in 1892—I believe this was the only case in which this actually happened—the two successful candidates each got exactly the same number of votes, 5,081. The two successful can-

didates were Sir Edward Clarke and the late Sir William Pearce. I will take now a Scottish case, if I may, though I speak with some diffidence in Lord Lochee's presence. If you take Dundee, which is our only Scottish two-member undivided constituency, in 1892, 1895, and in 1900, at all those elections Dundee returned two Liberal members.

1044. (Lord Lochee.) Within 10 or 20 votes in two cases?—Yes, although in each case the votes for the Conservative and Liberal Unionist candidates together aggregated more than the votes cast for either of the successful candidates.

1045. Do you mean plumpers?—I am simply taking the general result. I am afraid I have not the actual Dundee figures; but I mean this: If you look at the general result you find that the total Unionist vote aggregated considerably more than half of the total Liberal vote, and yet the Liberals gained both seats.

1046. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) Do you mean that if the Unionists had only run one candidate, and all had voted for him, that one would have got in?—Yes.

1047. (Lord Lochee.) I was one of the successful candidates on each occasion, and I do not think anybody would say there was a chance of a single Unionist getting in where the two failed. Have you got the figures? This statement in your memorandum must be wrong, "though the vote for the Unionist candidate aggregated more than those for either Liberal singly." What do you mean by "those for either Liberal singly"? I do not suppose I had 50 votes for myself alone?—I mean for either Liberal individually.

1048. Call it either Liberal singly or Liberal individually, I still fail to see what you mean. The votes given for either Liberal singly were very few, not more than 20 or 30 in each case?—I am not speaking as distinguishing plumpers. What I mean is that if I may use the general phrase, the votes which you received, or at least which the second Liberal candidate who got in received, were less than the aggregate which was scored—I use the phrase to avoid difficulties connected with plumpers—by the two Unionist candidates combined.

1049. If you had the actual figures I would remember them. At one of those elections I think you will find there was only one Unionist candidate, and the vote of the Liberals was smaller in the aggregate on that occasion, and yet the Unionist did not get in?—I made this out from the figures, and I am only sorry I have not the figures by me.* The putting together of

* The following note was subsequently received from the witness:—

With reference to the case of Dundee, the following are the figures for the General Elections of 1892, 1895, and 1900, referred to in my evidence, as given in the Parliamentary Poll Book:—

1892.	
Leng, (Sir) John	L. 8,484
Robertson, E.	L. 8,191
Dalgleish, (Sir) W. O.	C. 5,659
Smith, W. C.	L.U. 5,066
McDonald, J.	Lab. 354
1895.	
Robertson, E.	L. 7,602
Leng, Sir John	L. 7,592
Smith, W. C.	L.U. 5,390
Jenkins, E.	C. 4,318
McDonald, J.	Lab. 1,313
1900.	
Robertson, (Right Hon.) E.	L. 7,777
Leng, Sir John	L. 7,650
Smith, A. Duncan	C. 5,181
Graham, J. E.	L.U. 5,152

These will illustrate my reference. At each election the Liberal Vote aggregated considerably over one-half, and the Unionist Vote aggregated considerably over one-third of the total.

Under the present system, the aggregate Liberal majority over the whole made certain of their securing both seats at each of these elections.

If at any of these elections the alternative vote had been applied to Dundee as a two-member constituency, the quota necessary to secure election would have been one-third plus one of the total votes, and the Liberals and the Unionists would each have secured a seat.

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what might be two separate constituencies into one tends, in the absence of cross voting, to enable the party which slightly prevails on the whole to capture the two seats in a way that it might not be able to do if each had to be separately contested. Another disadvantage of two-member constituencies is with reference to bye-elections, because of course the whole constituency has to be contested. For instance, take the case of Dundee, one has to contest the whole of Dundee instead of half Dundee at a bye-election.

1050. At a general election you have to contest the whole?—Yes, but I am speaking of the special difficulty of a bye-election. Then those two-member constituencies, I think it will be admitted even by the advocates of proportional representation, are really too small for proportional representation to work satisfactorily. You want for proportional representation, apart from its merits or demerits, if it is to attain its end at all, to have a greater number of seats than the number of parties.

1051. (*Chairman.*) Would you yourself prefer proportional representation? Do you consider your scheme a stepping stone towards that?—I do not think so, necessarily. I cannot put myself forward as an advocate of proportional representation. I only mention those considerations that I have put forward as considerations in favour of splitting the two-member constituencies, which do not seem to serve any particularly useful purpose, into one-member constituencies. I quite recognise the difficulty of dealing on that basis with the Universities. The University representation opens up another question, on which of course I do not think I need say more than I have said. As regards proportional representation, I cannot profess to be in favour of that, because, although there is something to be said for it in theory, there seems to be grave practical difficulties. Assuming the general theory, it is not quite clear what should be regarded as the minimum number of members to be returned for the consolidated constituency. It is common ground that two is too small. Under modern conditions I am inclined to think that three would probably not be sufficient either. It would probably mean that each of the principal parties would get a member in, and the minority would be over-represented as compared with the majority. I should think it would vary from five to seven. But it seems to me to be particularly inapplicable to county constituencies. Take my own county constituency, Dumbartonshire. Even if there were only to be three-member constituencies you would have to consolidate into one Dumbartonshire, Argyllshire, and Buteshire, and the result would be a constituency which would be absolutely unworkable. I think that Dumbartonshire is about as big a county constituency as a member could undertake, even in the absence of Autumn Sessions, if he wants to keep in touch with his constituents, and to attempt to go around these three counties would be so hopeless that people would not undertake it. The result would be that there would be no personal knowledge; I mean people would hardly know their member by headmark; there would be a lack of interest in elections, and the whole thing would develop into far too much of a machine. In fact, I believe, but I cannot speak from experience, that that has been shown where a similar system is worked in other countries. I agree it would not be so bad in towns where there is, so to speak, a corporate life and a general interest, and where the area is much smaller. I have made out a list of the towns that do return more than two members, beginning in England with Liverpool with nine; Birmingham seven; Man-

chester six, and so on, until we get to some which return three. Then in Scotland, Glasgow returns seven and Edinburgh four; and in Ireland, Dublin and Belfast each return four. Now, if proportional representation were to work at all, it seems to me that that is the ambit within which it should work, but even in that ambit there are very serious difficulties. There seems to me a grave difficulty in the practical mixing of so many votes fairly; and imperfect mixing might, of course, affect the transference of the actual voting papers—but that perhaps is a minor objection. I have already mentioned the difficulty of selecting the packages, which should be transferred, where the packages are to be transferred down, and down again, and so on. It is not sufficient to re-distribute the votes proportionally; you have to transfer the packages, and there may be a considerable difference in the subsequent transfers, according to which packages are, in fact, transferred.

1052. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You are not aware, perhaps, or perhaps you are, that it is claimed that that objection has been met in Tasmania by the method of Mr. Clark, the Attorney-General of Tasmania?—I know it is claimed that it has been met, but I do not think it has been fully met, and indeed I do not see how it could be fully met unless you could go through, in the first instance, all the ballot papers and group them proportionately as between packages. I do not want to lay too much stress on that difficulty.

1053. It is something like that which is done in Tasmania?—That would involve an enormous quantity of work.

1054. Apparently they do it?—Yes, but their constituencies are so very much smaller than ours.

1055. Six members?—Yes, but the number of votes is so much smaller.

1056. It is a pretty large vote. They have the whole island as one constituency?—Yes.

1057. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You do not think the machinery is met by the machinery adopted in Lord Courtney's method?—I think it is partially met, but not completely.

1058. (*Chairman.*) That is the first distribution of preference where it is done by the proportional method?—Yes. Another difficulty in doing it even in these towns is the enormous cost and labour of bye-elections. That is a matter of some importance when one considers that in the majority of these towns there have been bye-elections even during the present Parliament. There has been a bye-election, for instance, in Liverpool; a bye-election in Glasgow; a bye-election in Edinburgh, and there is another pending in Edinburgh now. It would really be a very serious matter for a candidate to conduct his bye-election campaign not only over a division of Glasgow, but over the whole of Glasgow. I mention the case of bye-elections, because if one put it at a general election the answer would be, of course, that the cost would be distributed over a greater number of candidates, but, at a bye-election, you have a single candidate for one party contesting the whole city. He would contest the whole city if this proportional representation system were adopted, and it seems to me that is a great difficulty, and I do not quite see how it could be effectively met. I should not think anyone would propose to do away with these very interesting incidents in political life, and I think almost anyone would hesitate before embarking on the enormous cost and trouble of contesting a large city as a whole.

1059. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Have you counted how many of those bye-elections to which you have referred are due to acceptance of office? That is a removable cause?—It is a removable cause. I cannot say the precise proportion of them. I would be safe in saying it is not more than one-fifth. I have, however, gone through the total number of bye-elections, taking as a test the new members in the parliamentary record, and I may possibly have made a mistake of a unit in a single year, but during the life of the present Parliament it practically works out to this: In 1906 there were 14. Of course in 1906, the cause just referred to operated more largely than subsequently. In 1907 there were 24; in 1908, 29; and this year there have

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If Dundee had been divided into two single-member constituencies, either the Liberals would have won both seats, or they would have had an overwhelming majority in one, and the Unionists a small majority in the other.

Thus, the consolidation of the constituency on the present lines, coupled with the comparative absence of cross-voting, is more advantageous to the party which has a majority over the whole, and gives less chance to the party which has a minority—though a large minority—over the whole, than would be the case if it were divided into two single-member constituencies.

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already been 11, or with the bye-election pending in Edinburgh, 12. The total comes to 79 so far for the present Parliament. I mention that as showing that even during the time that the present Parliament has been running there have been bye-elections in substantially more than one-tenth of the seats, and even excluding the bye-elections resulting from the acceptance of office—I have not differentiated those figures—I should think that the number would be at least 60.

1060. (*Chairman.*) Assuming that in other respects this system was advantageous, do you think there is any means of getting over this difficulty of bye-elections—any system of co-option?—I think the only practical solution would lie along the lines of co-option, but co-option would be so much at variance with Parliamentary traditions, and would remove so much of the interest bye-elections have in political life, and generally throughout the country, that I should not like to see co-option for bye-elections.

1061. And as practical politics you think it very remote?—I think it very remote. The difficulty I have just mentioned of contesting, for instance, the whole city would operate unduly in favour of rich candidates, because the expenses would be so great, and while returning officers' expenses might be made public expenses, there would of course be no justification for putting things like the cost of halls and cost of advertising and those many other expenses on the public generally.

1062. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Would the expense be so very much greater? A man cannot address more than a certain number of meetings in an election, whether his constituency is large or small?—I agree. He is practically limited by time, but even so under the proportional representation conditions with a bye-election in a town he would always have to work up to his maximum, and I am inclined to think that in addition to evening meetings he would have to address a great many more meetings during the day, at the luncheon hour, and so on. In fact, I am sure the undertaking would be very much greater, and the cost of advertising and the cost of circularising the constituents would also be very much greater, even if you merely take the cost of sending out his election address. To send out an election address—taking Glasgow as one of the places with which I am most familiar—round one division of Glasgow is well within practical working, but to post election addresses to the electors throughout all the divisions of Glasgow would be an undertaking of the greatest magnitude and the greatest expense.

1063. Might not it lead to having election expenses reduced by law?—I should be very glad to see them reduced in any case, but if they were reduced on the present basis, then I think it would be much more satisfactory than reduction on the new basis, because however much they were reduced the expenses on the proportional representation basis for a bye-election would be much greater than on the present basis.

1064. Take a case with which I am familiar. In Australia, for the Federal Parliament there are men who have to stand for a whole State—constituencies larger than the United Kingdom, geographically. It was expected that would not work for reasons similar to those adduced by you, but it has worked quite well?—Are you taking the case of a bye-election?

1065. No, the case of a general election; and there are bye-elections, of course?—I do not think, as I have said, the difficulties would be so great in a general election, because the candidates would to a great extent co-operate as they do now in a two-member constituency. I was rather taking the case of bye-elections.

1066. (*Chairman.*) You do not think the mere magnitude would be so great that the whole tradition of electioneering would have to be altered?—No, I do not put it as high as that. I only put it as a very serious consideration against the general plan. On these grounds I would not be prepared to support proportional representation as regards the creation of multi-member constituencies, but I should be in favour of the alternative vote at all single-member elections, and I would also be in favour of splitting up two-member constituencies into single-member ones.

1067. I take it although your Bill contains a scheme for double-member constituencies, you would prefer re-distribution, and only single-member constituencies?—Yes.

1068. (*Lord Loches.*) Is not your scheme a substitute for schemes of proportional representation—not leading up to that, but a substitute for it. You do not believe in proportional representation as such?—I do not believe in proportional representation as such, but my scheme is not necessarily a substitute.

1069. You would not have both; you do not contemplate a system which would be Lord Courtney's scheme and yours also?—No.

1070. So yours is a substitute for his if his were proposed?—No.

1071. You think your scheme is better than his?—Yes, certainly, I think it would be better to have the transferable vote for single-member elections than to have proportional representation, but the adoption of the transferable vote for single-member elections does not preclude proportional representation any more than the present system precludes it. I mean either might develop into proportional representation, although I would not be in favour of either doing so.

1072. What you want to secure is, that the candidate elected shall at some stage of the proceedings have a recorded majority of the electors in his favour?—Quite so.

1073. Do not you think there is some danger of the second, third, and fourth preferences under your scheme being more trivially regarded by voters than the first? Supposing in a single-member election there were three or four candidates and you give the voter the power of voting for 1, 2, 3, and 4, vote 1 would be a serious vote, but is not there a danger that 2, 3, and 4 might be less seriously regarded by the voter?—In some cases that no doubt would be so. It would, of course, depend on the chances of the candidate for whom the first vote was given. But I am inclined to agree that after the second choice I do not think the subsequent choices would be of very much importance.

1074. Then that imparts an element of chance, does it not?—I do not think so.

1075. Although the elector gives away his second, third, or fourth choice for less serious reasons than he uses his first vote, still it may tell just as effectively as the first vote: it may aid in the return of a candidate. The second vote lightly given may aid in the return of a candidate for whom he does not care very much?—For whom he does not care very much I agree; but the mere fact that he had put the number against his name instead of against the name of an alternative candidate would seem to show he preferred that man to the alternative candidate.

1076. Yes, but not very much. I mean that he might not treat it so seriously as his principal vote, and thereby let a possible element of chance into the result?—Yes, that is possible.

1077. Has this scheme of yours been tried to your knowledge anywhere else?—No, I do not know that it has. When you say my scheme, do you mean my scheme of dealing with two-member constituencies in the Bill?

1078. I am not referring to two-member constituencies at all, but has your scheme of the alternative vote been applied anywhere to your knowledge?—I cannot say as to that. Mr. Robertson, I think, would speak with greater knowledge.

1079. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Have you read the Queensland Contingent Vote Law in the Colony of Queensland?—No.

1080. You have not noted the differences between that and your scheme and the likenesses?—No.

1081. Again, would you propose to make the use of the alternative vote, or the second and third preference votes under any scheme like yours optional or make them compulsory? Would you allow a man to give only one vote, and yet allow his ballot paper to be good?—I think so, certainly. In fact it might very likely be that a man might take up the position: "I will vote for So-and-so, but I will not vote for anyone else." In that case I would treat him in the same way as he is treated now. He need not vote if he does not

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[Continued.]

like. In fact, I understand, that in some places where something like proportional representation has been adopted there has been such a falling off of interest that compulsion has been put in force in order to make people vote. I should be very sorry to see that in our politics.

1082. Is it Belgium you are thinking of?—I cannot say, as I have not personal knowledge. I have been told so. I rather think it is Belgium, but I am not certain.

1083. You can see that if you allow the use of the alternative vote to be optional, one party by inducing their voters to refrain from using the alternative vote would make your whole system nugatory, or almost nugatory?—I quite recognise that one party might do that just as now they might advise their followers to abstain from voting altogether.

1084. That is a very different thing?—It seems to me the difference is one of degree, but I do not apprehend any serious danger from that.

1085. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) So far as the existing single-member constituencies are concerned you are in complete agreement with Mr. Robertson?—Yes.

1086. You think his scheme good and workable?—Yes, entirely.

1087. But so far as two-member constituencies are concerned you do not see your way to any quite satisfactory method of dealing with them?—I think the most satisfactory plan would be to split them up.

1088. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Your plan provides for a member being elected by a majority, but does not provide for the representation of minorities?—That is so.

1089. You object to that on several grounds. I think there is one further ground. How far would the party machine be affected by your plan?—I am inclined to think that the party machine would very likely become less powerful.

1090. I think in the two-member constituency you still leave a chance for the party machine, because in the third case that you gave just now, in which no candidate obtains a quota, it then is very important to the man that he should not be last on the list, or he is killed and distributed, and so, if you keep the two-member seats, do not you increase the power of the party organisation and make organisation more important?—I think so, and incidentally that is one of my objections to the two-member constituency. I am inclined to think that in the single-member constituency the Parliamentary machine does not proportionately

count for quite so much as where there is a larger group.

1091. There is this further objection, that if you have a two-member constituency you must start and distribute down?—Yes.

1092. And if you do that it really is the transferable vote, and for that method a two-member constituency is too small?—Yes.

1093. In fact, I think you would say that a two-member constituency is unworkable with the alternative vote. It is too difficult?—Yes. It is too big for the one and too small for the other.

1094. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You are opposed altogether to multi-member constituencies. Have you ever considered the position of a minority in any constituency which is represented by a member who does represent the majority? Have you no desire to secure, either by multiplying the members sitting for the constituency, or any other device, the representation of the minorities?—I quite recognise that difficulty, both under the present system and under the alternative vote, but I do not know that any scheme has been better devised than the present system, which, of course, has the incidental result that in one constituency one party is in a majority, and the other in a minority, but it is the other way round in another constituency, and so I think it works out not unfairly, taking the country over. I am far from saying there are no disadvantages, but my position is rather that proportional representation, as far as it seems to me to have been put forward, involves more disadvantages than advantages.

1095. You know, for instance, the case of Wales, which is constantly quoted as a place where the minority never really get a proper chance of representation. You have not put forward any scheme or suggestion for meeting such a difficulty as that?—No.

1096. (*Chairman.*) Your Bill, I see, only refers to Parliamentary elections?—Yes. I have limited it to Parliamentary elections.

1097. Would you be prepared to extend the system to municipal and local elections?—Yes, it seems to me that the same considerations apply. Indeed, with reference to proportional representation, it seems to me that if there is a case for that at all, there is a stronger case for applying it, at least experimentally, in those municipalities that desire it for municipal purposes, and seeing how it would work on that scale before applying it on a larger scale.

1098. In your own Bill you prefer to start with Parliamentary elections?—Yes, my Bill only deals with that.

The witness withdrew.

Mr. JOHN MACKINNON ROBERTSON, M.P., called in and examined.

1099. (*Chairman.*) You are the author of a Bill which you brought in in 1906, and an extension of the same Bill which was introduced last year?—Yes.

1100. I understand it did not get beyond the Second Reading. It never got into Committee?—No, never.

1101. Was it read a second time?—No.

1102. It was only read a first time?—Yes.

1103. The object of the Bill, I understand, is to prevent what happens now, a member being returned for a constituency who has failed to receive the majority of the votes?—Yes.

1104. The first part of your Bill has been adopted by Mr. White?—Substantially, yes.

1105. And what we have already gone through with him, as far as single-member constituencies are concerned, practically applies to your Bill?—Yes.

1106. The divergence between you comes when the double-member constituency comes into play?—Yes.

1107. Your system, I understand, of double-member constituencies is that the returning officer draws up two lists?—Yes.

1108. The names are placed in that list by lot?—Yes.

1109. I think it will be best if you explain the system that you suggest?—I will say at once that I myself am not satisfied with that method of dealing with the double-member constituencies, and in fact I agree with Mr. White that there is no satisfactory

method of applying the principle of the transferable vote to the two-member constituencies. After introducing the Bill with the part dealing with two-member constituencies I had certain cases put to me in which it could not be made to work, as we theoretically desired the principle should work, and I have come to the conclusion that there is no satisfactory way of dealing with two-member constituencies. I cannot think Mr. White's system is satisfactory any more than mine is. I call them both failures, and I am not mathematician enough to conceive of any other method. I should say with Mr. White that the proper course with regard to them is first to split them up.

1110. You think that would be the best way of dealing with any system of alternative vote—to confine it to single-member constituencies?—Yes, so far as that particular measure goes; but I go further and support the proportional representation system.

1111. Do you consider your scheme a stepping stone to proportional representation?—Yes, it was so conceived as a stepping stone.

1112. Your idea was that it would prepare the mind of the country for the further development?—Yes.

1113. You are dissatisfied, I understand, with the present system?—Yes, thoroughly so.

1114. You think it is not truly representative?—The very arguments that we have against the state of things in which a minority returns a member for a

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single constituency applies to the representation of the country as a whole. If it is a serious evil that a minority should return a member for one constituency, how much more monstrous is the evil of a minority returning a Government to power, which may happen under the present system, and has happened.

1115. Do you anticipate any danger, under a scheme by which minorities secure representation, that the majority will not be effective enough to carry on government?—No, I have heard that urged by experienced and practical men, but I cannot see any danger. I was thinking of a particular Government—the 1892–1895 Government—which had a very small majority for working purposes. The result of that was that the majority had to work very hard, but they seem to me to have done as efficient work and as much legislation as ever has been done. It was in all respects a thoroughly efficient Parliament, and theoretically in that case you get the maximum of useful criticism.

1116. (*Lord Loches.*) It broke down before its time, owing to the smallness of its majority?—That I suppose would be the real reason, and not the ostensible one. Still it did three years very hard work.

1117. The present majority would have stood where the old majority failed to stand in 1892–1895?—Possibly, but it does not seem to me that giving representation to minorities will give you for general purposes a small working majority.

1118. (*Chairman.*) It is conceivable it might give rise to a system of groups?—Yes.

1119. And that no one group might have a majority over a combination of other groups?—For certain purposes, yes; but even with the system of groups you would have good majorities for a great many things. The question arises whether that is not theoretically the kind of legislation that the Legislature should give.

1120. You think the advantages accruing from each section being represented outweigh any possible disadvantages?—In my opinion, yes.

1121. This particular measure you brought forward has been brought forward with the idea of its ultimately developing into the other system?—Yes, into proportional representation.

1122. I may take it that you do not approve of the system of a second ballot?—No.

1123. You think that would be unworkable in this country?—It would be workable, but it seems to me the evils of it are considerable, and the transferable vote system is so much simpler and secures one against the risk of corruption, which is sure to arise in the second ballot, which seems to me to put a premium upon corruption and adds to the expense, labour, annoyance, and disturbance of every description. I can see no room for balancing between the transferable vote and the second ballot.

1124. You think the transferable vote secures the same result at much less cost and much less danger of malpractices?—It seems so to me.

1125. Your system is that a candidate who receives a majority straight away would be elected straight away?—Yes.

1126. You obtain the quota on a similar system to Lord Courtney's?—Yes.

1127. Would you make an alternative choice compulsory?—No, I do not think so. I confess I have not thought much upon that subject, and I am very slow to contemplate any such compulsion.

1128. You would not, for instance, contemplate the idea of making voting compulsory to start with?—No, I think not.

1129. The actual marking of the ballot paper should be optional to the individual elector?—Yes.

1130. So that he can vote for 1, 2, or 3, as he prefers?—Yes.

1131. Do you think this system will tend to encourage party organisation? Will it make the official party organs more powerful than at present?—I have a difficulty in coming to a confident conclusion. I should think the tendency would be so, but rather from this general consideration that organisation is on the increase in all directions. The whole tendency of all our life is more and more towards organisation, and I cannot think of any considerations that would

check that in this case. But I should also hold that the intensification of organisation would tend to promote the intellectual improvement of the organisation and the moralisation of the organisation, and I do not regard that as an evil.

1132. You do not think there is any evil to be anticipated from the party wire-pullers taking an even more prominent part than they do now?—No, I should expect with this intensification of organisation there would tend to be a moral improvement of organisation, raising it on a higher plane. Organisation itself is not a bad thing, and you would have better use of organisation in the future than in the past with every such improvement as this.

1133. I understand you transfer up always?—Yes.

1134. In the model which you give in your Bill, it shows that even in a single-member constituency it is possible that an element of chance does enter into it?—Is that so? I have not been struck by any element of chance that would at all vitiate this.

1135. For instance, take the votes given for Wilkinson, who is at the bottom of the poll: the preferences on Wilkinson's votes may decide the election?—Yes.

1136. Whereas the preferences on Smith, who has still no chance of being elected, do not come into play at all?—In that case there is the possibility of applying a selection, that is selecting from Smith and Wilkinson proportionately. That I confess is a difficulty. I suppose we should just have to admit that such a conjectural figure as this does constitute an element of chance.

1137. It is a purely arbitrary distinction whether you transfer the man's votes from the one at the bottom or one from the bottom, and so on?—I suppose in this case it is conceivable, though I have not thought it out; you might rule that where "Smith" on the face of the case cannot be elected, you might take them both as out together and transfer their votes proportionately to the total. Would that meet the difficulty?

1138. But that would add considerably to the difficulties of counting, and make it much more complicated than the system you suggest?—Yes, it would. I do not think the evil of the chance element is sufficient to make it necessary to make that provision. It is very difficult to imagine all the possible complications of an election. I myself find when I go over the ground again that new cases do suggest new difficulties.*

1139. Have you entered into the consideration of the Attercliffe figures for the election the other day where three of the candidates received very much the same number of votes?—I did not work that out.

1140. A variety of complications might arise in an election like that?—Yes.

1141. As far as two-member constituencies are concerned the complications are even greater?—Yes, I see no satisfactory way of dealing with that.

1142. Failing a redistribution whereby the whole country would be mapped out into possible multi-member constituencies, you prefer single-member constituencies?—Yes, if that is the sole alternative.

1143. I understand you put this forward, not in opposition to the multi-member constituencies?—Not at all. I am in favour of them and would withdraw such a Bill as this if there is any prospect of proportional representation being carried.

1144. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Real proportional representation?—Yes, the complete system.

* The following note was subsequently received from the witness:—"I desire to retract an erroneous admission hastily made by me in answering questions 1135–6–7–8 and 1204–5–6. The difficulty there urged does not really arise. If, as in the case put in my schedule, the votes of the third candidate could, on being transferred to the first or second, give him the majority, then the votes of the fourth cannot, however transferred, return one of them. By no chance can the votes of the lowest candidate return any other, if the votes of the next lowest candidate would suffice to return either the first or second when added to either. In the terms of the case, the votes of the lowest candidate cannot by transference give a majority to anybody. The votes of the third candidate must therefore be dealt with in turn. I understood Mr. Hills to admit this when it was put to him after my examination was over.—JOHN M. ROBERTSON."

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1145. (*Chairman.*) This system of two-member constituencies you do not think is a practical method with a double list?—No, I confess, after preparing it, on thinking it out in special cases the difficulties seemed insurmountable.

1146. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) I do not quite understand why you think that the system of alternative vote would lead up to the system of proportional representation?—Only in the sense of preparing the public mind for proportional representation. The people would see a kind of simple application of the ideal of proportional representation, and would be in that way prepared for it. I do not see that in itself it necessarily leads up to it.

1147. Does not it do the other thing? Does not it retard it?—It is very difficult to know the effect of a particular object lesson on the popular mind.

1148. Is not it from the Parliamentary point of view more precise than that, because you have to have redistribution in an Electoral Reform Bill, in which, in order to give effect to your scheme, you would have to abolish all the two-member constituencies?—Yes.

1149. That would be concreting, at any rate for a term of years, single-member constituencies all over the country?—Yes.

1150. That is rather withdrawing from multi-member constituencies than advancing towards them?—Of course the educative effect on the public would only arise in the case of the application of this when the transferable system had to be applied; but in any case it is a case of recasting the electoral system. This would never be put forward in competition with a scheme of proportional representation.

1151. (*Lord Loches.*) In fact, you propose it as a temporary alternative?—A temporary alternative, and also one which I thought in operation would enable people to think out the proportional representation method. The difficulty about proportional representation is not any inefficacy of the argument, but simply the ignorance of the general public as to the principle and how it would work. When people had made the admission that the evil of a member being returned by a minority is sufficient to call for such a revision as this, they would then be prepared to take the further step and admit that the evil of a Government being returned by a total minority called for the greater reform.

1152. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) But the legislative revolution ultimately would be greater if you swept away the two-member constituencies now?—You mean that the two-member constituencies represent a process of grouping, and that you have finally to group?

1153. Yes?—But this is, I should say, because of the hopelessly bad grouping. Sweeping the two-member groups, if you call them groups, out of the way, is not, I should say, an obstacle to bigger grouping.

1154. By-and-bye, if the system of proportional representation is introduced, I take it you may have to abolish all the towns returning less than five members, and throw them into the adjoining counties?—It is a case of simply grouping your constituencies—those that you would group. Might I offer some suggestions on the general question of the advantages and disadvantages of the proportional representation system with regard to Mr. Dundas White's evidence. I conceive that you might have an electoral system in which you have, say, town groups. You might have constituencies of three, perhaps most of them of three, and in some cases of five and of seven, and you might still provide for counties (such as Mr. Dundas White's constituency), by retaining single-member constituencies. I do not see why we should not have constituencies of every type, except, of course, the two-member constituency, which is the one which seems to be excluded on all principles. The two-member constituency is one in which a town is absolutely nullified by having two members opposed to each other, or in which a minority is absolutely cancelled by having two members of one way of thinking representing the whole. The two-member constituency seems to me to meet no kind of ideal in politics, except the ideal of having a very large majority for working purposes. I do not see

why we should not have constituencies of various sorts. I quite recognise the difficulty Mr. Dundas White puts as to his county. In my own case I have a division of Northumberland. If you group the whole of Northumberland it would make an enormously onerous division to work. In cases of that kind I readily admit the propriety of retaining single-member constituencies. On the other hand, something might be done, say, experimentally in the way of combining town constituencies with country districts round about them. It seems to me that the principle of proportional representation admits of being brought into existence by a variety of methods; that is, making exceptions to allow for such difficulties as Mr. Dundas White puts, and taking advantage of the natural grouping of towns.

1155. (*Chairman.*) Do not you think the two systems of single-member and multi-member constituencies, side by side, would be very inconvenient in working?—I cannot readily think of any special inconveniences any more than there has been special inconvenience in the working of the two-member constituencies alongside the other constituencies.

1156. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) The minority in a county like Dumfriesshire, of which Mr. Dundas White, spoke, would feel very much aggrieved if it remained a single member constituency while Argyll was a multi-member constituency?—The answer would be that you have got to the irreducible minimum. Minorities must be in certain instances past help, as it were, and the Dumfriesshire people would, I fancy, rather suffer the inconvenience of having their minority unrepresented than be grouped into a constituency of two other counties with a perambulating member whom they might only see once in two or three years.

1157. But supposing there were three perambulating members, and not one?—That would be beyond their share. The difficulty in Mr. Dundas White's case is created by sparsely peopled counties.

1158. Take Northumberland—would not it diminish the labour very much if you had five or six members working together?—That could be done, and I fancy, as regards the question of cost which Mr. Dundas White raised, that the actual increase in cost which I think would take place, though I agree it would not be in proportion to the increase in size of the constituency, would tend to accentuate the desirability of having those costs borne by the party and the supporters, and not by the candidates. In so far as a new burden was thrown on the candidate it might, I think, have a reformative effect. I consider the present system, under which candidates have to bear their expenses, a fundamentally vicious system, and if the new system made it much more difficult to get anybody to bear the expense it would tend to force the creation of a new method by which, first of all, official expenses should be certainly publicly borne, and the other expenses of the candidates should be borne by the party or group they represent in a systematic way.

1159. (*Chairman.*) I understand that one of the chief advantages advocated by supporters of proportional representation is that the independent member would have a chance of being returned to Parliament?—That is a point as to which I have some difficulty in thinking with the other supporters of proportional representation in regard to large town constituencies. I think I should tend to dissent from my friends on that particular point, though one can conceive of cases where an independent candidate, of great capacity, would very easily get in. A certain kind of candidate, the candidate with great capacity, would perhaps have a better chance under proportional representation and grouping of constituencies than at present. An independent candidate who had not great capacity of appealing to the public would, I think, have less chance.

1160. With reference to the expenses of a large constituency, taking the case of an independent candidate, for instance, standing for Glasgow, the mere fact of his having to circularise the whole of the electorate of Glasgow would be practically prohibitive?—Financially it would be so. If he had any party at all it would tend to bring about a state of things in which it was recognised that the candidate should not bear his

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own expenses, but that the party should back him up. As that tendency is clearly at work in the politics of the Labour Party it would tend to develop in the politics of the other parties also.

1161. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) You think under a system of proportional representation the party machine would still be powerful?—Yes, I do think so.

1162. And an elector would be likely to vote according to the ticket, so to speak?—On the other hand the ticket would be apt to be more scrupulously chosen; that is to say, there is always a reaction. If the party machine be worked unscrupulously, it always tends to bring about its own cure. A party attempting to force a ticket on the public, without a very careful calculation of the public wishes, will always find itself thrown over, so that the tendency is to make the party organisation more really representative of the public feeling.

1163. But it is your opinion that the constituency would, under a system of proportional representation, vote according to the party ticket put forward by the party leaders?—But, on the other hand, under such a system the party leaders would have to be more and more thoroughly in touch with the elector. For instance, take the instance of the bye-election for Glasgow put by Mr. Dundas White. I should like to suggest that in such a case a bye-election might have very considerable political value. At present when bye-elections occur they are cited by the party that wins always as a valuable illustration of public feeling. Under the present system they have very doubtful value indeed as indicating public feeling, because the local variations are so great. Under a system of grouped constituencies a bye-election would tend to have a very considerable evidential value. It would cover a large area and the mere element of local variation would be minimised. Again as regards the cost, which is the main difficulty, the cost would tend to be more and more borne by the organisations, and when the question of cost is eliminated I think the other objections are small. As regards the labour put upon the candidate, in these days a candidate has to do in an election absolutely all he can. Mr. Dundas White spoke of his having to attend more meetings. Well, there is a limit to that—the purely physical limit—and it is nearly reached now. A candidate in an election to-day has to go to six, seven, or eight meetings; he has to go to mid-day meetings and breakfast meetings. In the last Newcastle election, candidates addressed meetings at the breakfast hour, meetings at the luncheon hour, and meetings in the evening. You are already doing all you can. In this case the candidate, instead of trying to get at the electors by the old method of personal address (which after all belongs to the age before reading), would more and more rely upon getting at the electors by means of literature, and the reports of the meetings. As it is I doubt whether in my own division I have been personally seen by the majority of my electors, although I had been canvassing it for three years before the General Election. Multitudes of people in every constituency, I think, never see the candidate at all. In the first place they will all have to see his election address; then other sorts of literature are at the disposal of all candidates, and when you consider all these facts the mere physical difficulty of the candidate getting at such a large constituency practically disappears.

1164. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) It might lead to an improvement in the literature?—That is conceivable, though I am afraid there are also possibilities the other way.

1165. You think the intensifying of a party machine system tends to moralise it?—That is my view.

1166. That might apply to the literature?—I cannot exactly think out how the same consideration would apply there. The theory of literature is to get at the largest number of minds. The literature I take it would go up and down according to individual tastes, except in so far as the general tendency to moralise the machine would tend to moralise the literature.

1167. Do you consider the American system intensified?—It is very difficult for me to enter into any comparison between the American system and ours. One is struck there by an apparently injurious operation

of the machine, an unscrupulous working of the machine, and a lack of due public control or check upon the machine. But I do not think that our politics are going in that direction. The conditions which have led to the preponderance of a kind of brute machine in American politics do not seem to me to arise here. Our public seem to me from decade to decade not less, but rather more fully in touch with the political issues of the hour. I hardly like to offer an opinion on American politics, but I suggest that one great cause of their difficulties from our point of view is that the general turmoil and struggle for existence, and on the whole the larger area of the struggle, and the greater chances, let us say, of making a fortune, create an atmosphere of indifference to political issues in America, and have done so in the past, and perhaps tend even more so just at present. A great many people in America pay no heed to politics, take no interest in elections, and leave it to the machine man to run everything.

1168. The machine is extraordinarily good, not morally, but as a matter of efficiency?—As a machine, I believe that is so.

1169. Yet it is not moralised yet?—No; I think the conditions of moralisation are, first of all, the very keen interest of the mass of the people in politics, and with us that interest is, I think, rather on the increase than on the decline.

1170. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Would not you say that in the United States the questions raised are more personal than here?—I suppose there is a good deal more personal imputation upon candidates, and so on, than here; I do not know whether it is that, as people take no interest in politics, they try to raise questions that will interest them, and the personal morals of a candidate are regarded as a more stimulating subject.

1171. Coming back to the question which was touched on a little while ago, you spoke of your Bill as possibly familiarising the public mind with the principles of proportional representation. Do not you identify rather too closely the transferable vote with proportional representation? The transferable vote may be used for the purpose of giving more effective representation to a majority, as under Mr. Dundas White's Bill and your Bill. It may also be used as in the system of the Proportional Representation Society, for giving more effective representation to minorities?—That is so.

1172. The two things are quite distinct?—In fact, almost opposite.

1173. Your Bill, although it may familiarise the public mind with the machinery of the transferable vote, would not necessarily familiarise it with the principle of proportional representation?—No, only in a very partial degree I admit.

1174. You have had a good deal of practical experience in contesting elections, and in acting for yourself and others in elections?—A certain amount.

1175. I understand you are in favour of the principle of multi-member constituencies and proportional election as a rule?—Yes.

1176. What are the main advantages to be derived from the adoption of that system if it were adopted?—In getting rid of the kind of injustice, on the one hand, that is perpetrated at present where a man is returned for one constituency by a minority vote. If, say, as in certain elections within the present Parliament, a man is returned who represents really a comparatively small minority of the whole electorate, that I understand is regarded generally as shocking to the sense of justice. That I think accounts for the general acceptance of such Bills as Mr. Dundas White's and mine. On the same ground, it is shocking to one's sense of justice, and shocking to common sense, that a series of accidental majorities over a number of constituencies should enable a Government to be actually returned to power by a minority of the whole electorate. The shock to the sense of justice there is surely very great.

1177. Is that a risk we need seriously contemplate?—Has not it occurred?

1178. Is not that a very arguable question?—Perhaps there are more flaws in the statistics than I know of, but it is certainly quite conceivable that the

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minority might in their small number of successes have large majorities, and the majority win the majority of seats by small majorities.

1179. It is conceivable, but it has been seriously doubted whether it has ever taken place?—I have accepted the figures put in my hand usually, and am not aware how they have been impugned—the 1886 case, and the 1895 case, on contested elections.

1180. You are doubtful whether the multi-member system would help or would not help the independent candidate?—Yes, there is a certain balancing of considerations. One kind of independent candidate would gain and another would lose. The highly capable independent candidate, the man with platform capacity, would gain.

1181. Would not the tendency of the party be to put forward one strong candidate who might not be independent, but who would be popular, and a number of safe men?—The choice of the party would always tend to be overruled by the local groups. I gather from my slight knowledge of political machines, that in these days the headquarters of the machine is far more concerned than ever to secure local choices. I take it that if you were to go back several generations, there were far more cases of imposing a carpet-bagger from London on constituencies than take place now. Now the machine has grown very sensitive, and at headquarters they realise more and more the importance of letting local wishes decide.

1182. Even under multi-member constituencies?—Yes.

1183. That was one of the arguments urged by Count Goblet d'Alviella in favour of the multi-member system, that it gave a better chance to a local candidate?—Yes, I think that is a tendency which is clearly the result of the whole tendency of our politics, and not merely of the application of this system.

1184. You would not object to a mixed system of multi-member and single-member constituencies?—No I think people are entitled to ask that it should be applied experimentally.

1185. (*Chairman.*) You would commence with the big boroughs first?—Yes, but I should also try to group towns with the country round about. I know it is objected that the interests are different in a town and the districts round about, but it seems to me a very useful thing that there should be different interests brought together to force members, for one thing, to realise that politics involve such a perpetual variety and clashing of interests. The representing of one interest by one man, or set of men, in Parliament, is rather dangerous. Mixed interests are advisable.

1186. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You are anxious for a change in the existing system as early as possible?—Yes.

1187. You are not prepared to advocate proportional representation at the moment?—If we could get the measure in a general Reform Bill for applying it at the next General Election, I am prepared to support that.

1188. Supposing you had to advocate a particular plan of altering the system of electing Members of Parliament at once, would you suggest proportional representation, or would you think it wiser to take the alternative vote, as in your Bill, first?—The fact is, my Bill was introduced first in 1906, when there seemed very little prospect of getting the country to listen to proportional representation. The great success of the experimental elections, and other means of propaganda, induced me to think that a measure of proportional representation might conceivably be adopted in connection with the coming general Reform Bill. The whole question was, for me, as a practical politician: To what extent was the country aware of this question?

1189. I think you said in answer to the Chairman that one of the advantages of your Bill would be to accustom the voters of this country to the use of the alternative vote?—Yes, that is how I first looked at the matter.

1190. On reflection you do not think it is necessary to accustom them to that process?—It may be. One really cannot tell. If we cannot get proportional

representation, then I should still stand for the transferable vote for single-member constituencies.

1191. You think that there are certain districts in which proportional representation ought not to be applied, at any rate at once, even though the rest of the country was ripe for it?—Yes; such a case as Mr. Dundas White put of his county would be one of them.

1192. Country districts particularly?—Yes.

1193. But if you were grouping towns would you be prepared to group the town with the country around it rather than with other towns in different localities?—Yes, I should prefer that.

1194. It has been suggested to the Commission that the relative dignity of being, let us say, one of the members for Southampton is greater than being a member for North or South Southampton. Do you think there is anything in that?—For what it is worth that is in favour of proportional representation.

1195. Yes, but it is against the splitting of two-member constituencies?—Yes, I know it has been argued. I confess I should not regard it as a very serious argument one way or the other; it is hardly worth discussing.

1196. As to dealing with the method of conducting a campaign in a multi-member constituency, I think you said you did not attach much importance to Mr. Dundas White's argument that it would be necessary for him to do more work in the way of addressing meetings, because he does all he can at present?—Yes.

1197. He has a considerable amount of outside help from ladies and gentlemen able to help him?—That is so. Our politics are showing more and more signs of solidarity. In every election there is more intervention from areas round about than there used to be.

1198. In a bye-election in a multi-member constituency with a large number of votes, you would increase that intervention from outside in proportion to the work done by the candidate?—You mean supposing Manchester were one constituency people would come into it from outside Manchester.

1199. The work done by people, not the candidate, would be larger than it is at present?—It would tend to be so, but again that is very much on the increase now. The work done by persons in addition to the candidate has become very much greater within the past two or three years, I understand. All sorts of organisations now pour themselves into every constituency.

1200. That would tend to increase the expense of an election, even though the candidate, as at present, does all the work he himself personally can do?—It is quite clear that in a grouped electorate, although the cost would not be in proportion to the population, it would be more costly than the other. I grant that. My answer on that head is that, I think, the difficulty would force the placing of all financing of elections on a sounder basis than at present. The statement now is that a fairly rich man is needed to run a bye-election in the ordinary constituencies, he paying his expenses. The alternative is, if you group them together, he would need to be a considerably richer man. The answer would be that the cure lies not in the line of retaining a system that needs a fairly rich man to be a candidate, but in making a reconstruction which will get rid of that qualification, and make it a matter of course that the expenses in the public interest should not be borne by the candidate.

1201. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) From your own electioneering experience do you find that the electorate generally are beginning to take an interest in the principle of proportional representation? Is it a question that interests them?—No, I cannot say that.

1202. You have not found any evidence of it?—In my own division, although I have mentioned it and said I am in favour of it, I do not remember ever having been questioned on the subject. Where I have gone and discussed the matter, say, before Liberal organisations, where you will get an audience of the men who would specially think of these matters, I have found a very keen interest, especially in big towns.

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Mr. J. MACKINNON ROBERTSON, M.P.

[Continued.]

1203. In which direction?—In favour of proportional representation. I remember in Manchester finding the thing had been very keenly canvassed there, and finding a great proportion of opinion in favour of it in my own party in Manchester; but I believe in a great many of the constituencies they have not yet heard of it.

1204. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) One question on the schedule to your Bill. The Chairman has pointed out a weakness in the way of counting the votes. I think one can put it as high as this, that if the first two candidates are together, the election is won by the party not that gets their man first, but that gets their man last?—Yes, it could so happen, I think.

1205. That, of course, would be an absurd result?—Yes.

1206. And it could be remedied by some system of counting?—Yes, it could be remedied.*

1207. I take it you are not in favour of Mr. Hare's system, the old system of going all into one constituency?—Theoretically I am. It seems to me the logical outcome of the whole argument, but it seems quite unworkable.

1208. You do not think locality is of importance in elections?—Locality is primarily the very basis of representation. Our whole system grows out of the idea of locality.

1209. Mr. Hare sweeps away all locality?—I should say Mr. Hare was far ahead of the possibilities, but there is an ideal that we may ultimately attain.

1210. And so you would work through the alternative vote, the transferable vote, and up to Mr. Hare's system?—I cannot conceive Mr. Hare's system coming into operation for a very long time; but in a highly educated nation Mr. Hare's would be the system, no doubt.

1211. Then you said you thought that party organisation would be strengthened and improved by proportional representation. I suppose the opposite is conceivable. Take this case: If you had to make up your list for a big town with seven members, like Birmingham, it is conceivable that it would pay a party best to play to the sectional interest—to have one man for the publican's vote, one for the Nonconformist vote, one for the Church vote, and so on?—Yes, that seems arguable.

1212. Is it not arguable also that the representation of minorities is not always the representation of the national interest, that it tends to the formation of

special groups that are pledged to special interests that may not be the national interest?—Obviously that risk is there, but that must be accepted. There is no theory by which you can say in advance that a minority representation will be good or bad.

1213. I quite agree?—It lets in cranks, as we say, but you have to accept that. A healthy system will have to let in cranks.

1214. You would not regard that as a danger that would prevent you from trying the system?—No, not at all. In fact, I sometimes think that no conceivable system could involve more evils than the one we have.

1215. The alternative vote in many constituencies would remedy many of the evils?—It would remedy that particular evil which is apt to be rather acutely felt, but it is one of those evils that presents itself particularly vividly to the common intelligence, and yet is not more serious than evils they are not concerned about. That question, for instance, of the nation as a whole being misrepresented is obscured from the public by the mass of elections. Again, the phenomena of cases like Birmingham and Manchester—Birmingham on the one hand wholly represented by Conservatives, and Manchester for a time wholly represented by Liberals.

1216. Wales is even a stronger case?—Yes, a similar case. Evils like that seem much more shocking on the whole than the evil of the minority getting a man in a single seat.

1217. (*Chairman.*) Would you extend this system to municipal and local elections?—Yes, I think so.

1218. You propose to begin with Parliamentary elections?—Yes, I am quite prepared to do that.

1219. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Would you prefer to begin with Parliamentary election?—I do not know that I have any particular reason for that.

1220. Would not you say there was a stronger case for local elections than for Parliamentary elections?—I could not find a confident answer one way or the other. I have not thought out the various considerations.

1221. In the case of a local election the personal element is more important. They want to get an efficient man to do the work. In the case of a Parliamentary election the main object which most of the voters are thinking about is which party shall be in?—That is so. That is what they are thinking of, but I should be a little hesitant as to admitting that it did not matter what was the qualification for a Parliamentary representative.

* See note on page 73.

The witness withdrew.

EIGHTH DAY.

Wednesday, 19th May 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D., D.C.L.
The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Right Hon. JAMES PARKER SMYTH called and examined.

1222. (*Chairman.*) You were formerly member of Parliament for the Partick Division of Lanarkshire?—Yes.

1223. You have stood as candidate in six elections for a single-member constituency, and have been successful four times?—Yes.

1224. I think you have for a considerable period taken a great interest in this question of proportional representation?—Yes.

1225. Particularly in the problems which it represents from the mathematical point of view?—Yes, I

have considered it from the political and also the mathematical side.

1226. I see you say in your memorandum that you have for a period considered the present system fulfilled all requirements?—Yes. I was on the Proportional Representation Committee in 1884 and 1885, and at that time felt very strongly in favour of proportional representation, and wrote various articles in support of it when acting for the Committee. Then when I got into the House of Commons I felt very much the practical advantages of single-member constituencies, and

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[Continued.]

what was to be gained by a member being in touch with a smaller district in the way he can be in the case of a single-member constituency, and my feelings cooled towards proportional representation; but of late, in view of the extremely violent swings of the pendulum from one side to the other, I have again come to feel that proportional representation is necessary in this country.

1227. Do you think it desirable that the present system should be changed?—Yes, I do.

1228. What do you consider to be the disadvantages of the present system?—I think the present system makes two necessary postulates, in the first place, and will not work at all if you have not got them. Our present system is, and since 1885 has been, the system of single-member districts roughly of equal size. The growth of population, of course, has made them unequal, but the principle has been that they should be as nearly as possible of equal size. Now that system will only work so as to give representation to different parties at all reasonably on two conditions—that there shall be only two parties, and those parties nearly equally divided. It does not work, as I will show presently, if you have three or more contesting parties, and it does not work unless the two parties are nearly equally divided. If there is any great preponderance on the one side or the other, then you have as a result the monopolising of the complete representation by the party that happens to be in a majority. As it happens, both those conditions—two parties only, and the nearly equal division of electors—have obtained in Great Britain for the last 25 years, and, therefore, the system has worked moderately well; but there are plenty of instances to be seen where they have not obtained. For instance, in Belgium you have three parties, and you have had evidence (which I need not go into) as to the necessity they found of changing the system. In Ireland you have an overwhelming preponderance of one party through the greater part of Ireland, and of the other party in the remaining part, with the result that in each part the preponderant party monopolises the representation and the other party gets no chance whatever.

1229. In your memorandum you quote Burke?—I might take perhaps the drawbacks of the single-member system, even in a country where those two postulates are satisfied and where it works. The drawbacks, to my mind, or rather I should say positively, are, in the first place, the excessive swing of the pendulum that a small change of opinion gives, the result being to give a greatly exaggerated representation to the party that for the time being is in a majority. Beyond that, it has the effect of giving excessive power to the balancing elector—to the small number of voters who are influenced by some outside object or another, and who are to be won or to be brought over to the side of the candidate. Thirdly, though it may seem not altogether consistent with the last, there is the excessive rigidity of party discipline which it involves, and the necessity of trying to make every member of a party conform to the accepted and normal party standard. Now, I think, in considering how far those are drawbacks, one wants to consider what your principle of representation is. Is it what Burke long ago defined it as, when he said “the virtue, spirit, and essence of a House of Commons consists in its being the express image of the feelings of the nation”? Is that what you want as the result of a general election, or do you want to have a thumping majority coming out on the one side or the other? If you toss up a coin you want it to come down either heads or tails; you do not want heads and tails to be proportionately represented, but you want a definite result on the one side or the other. Is that the object of our elections, or is it to obtain representation of the different portions of the feelings of the nation?

1230. Do you not consider that besides representing the nation the House of Commons ought also to be the means of the Government of the day receiving sufficient power to carry on the government effectively?—Certainly, that is absolutely necessary; but I should like to point out that the House of Commons has been that for the last couple of hundred years, and this

system of party rigidity and single-member constituencies has only existed for the last 25 years.

1231. You do not think the result of our present party system is that the system of government is satisfactory?—No, I do not. We have had our party system. Consider the House of Commons before 1832, for example. I always maintain that it is quite arguable that the House of Commons before 1832 represented the nation better than it did after 1832, that is to say, in Burke's sense I think it did. I think there was much more opportunity for all the different kinds of feeling of the nation to get themselves expressed under the old system by which there were entirely different franchises in the different boroughs and in the counties, than where you enforce uniformity and single-member districts. That is a paradox which I would not exactly maintain as true; but it is a perfectly arguable line to take up, and there is a great deal to be said on that side. You will remember that we maintained our system of party government perfectly well for long before 1832.

1232. But do not you think that in making any alteration in the present system we might be encouraging a system of groups which would render a majority extremely difficult of attainment?—I certainly do think you would give more latitude of opinion to members. At present there is one sort of procrustean standard, which it is assumed (though we know it is not the actual fact) that every member of the majority conforms to, and another which every member of the minority conforms to. We know that is not the fact, and I do not think you gain much by pretending that it is. You undoubtedly would allow much greater latitude of opinion, and in that sense you would have groups; but I think you would have to trust to the common sense of members of Parliament to know that the first business of the House of Commons is to let the King's Government go on.

1233. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) As a matter of history, did the pendulum swing very violently backwards and forwards before 1832?—On occasions. I should not say often, but remember Pitt's first election. I would not like to state the facts, but I think it did not swing so often or so much, except where there was a real passion going through the nation, as in 1784.

1234. (*Chairman.*) Double-member constituencies you consider a mere relic of the past?—I consider them a mere historical survival. I do not think anybody would now propose to set them up. They have all the disadvantages of the single-member constituencies, and none of the advantages. I regard them as a simple historical survival of the time when it was found necessary to send up two men from each town for fear one of them should come to grief on the way, or anything of that kind.

1235. In any change which should be adopted you recommend that the present two-member seats should be abolished?—Subject to local and historical feeling.

1236. But as a general principle you would not retain them?—As a general principle, subject to the same kind of local feeling that has made them survive until now, I certainly think they ought to be abolished.

1237. Do you say the present system gives disproportionate representation to a party with a small majority?—Yes; that is a point which I wish specially to bring out—that the natural, the mathematical effect of a system of single-member constituencies is not to give a division of the members of the House of Commons corresponding to the majority in the country, but is to magnify very much the majority which the party happens to be in in the country. If that majority is more than a moderate one—if it amounts to more than, say, 15 per cent.—the result is to give an exclusive representation to the party that has the majority. Of course the single-member constituency gives proportional representation in respect of geographical distribution. You can, by single-member divisions, give Scotland its exactly proportional corresponding share of members *quâ* Scotland; you can give Ireland, *quâ* Ireland, or Wales, *quâ* Wales, its proper share; but that is the only kind of division of feeling with regard to which proportional representation is given by the single-member system. It is a fallacy that the gains and

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[Continued.]

losses of the two parties average—that the minority gains in one place what it loses in another. If the parties are distributed tolerably at random throughout the country and are not all concentrated into separate districts—which, of course, is the condition of things in England, and, though not quite so much, is still so to a very fair amount in Scotland, and again, though not quite so much, is still so within reason in Wales, but not at all so in Ireland—the theory of chance applies pretty well, and what that theory would give you is the overwhelming preponderance of the party in the majority. That is what the experience of recent general elections shows. I will give the facts for Great Britain. I leave out Ireland, for this reason: the majorities there are so great that the balance is not sensitive at all. In the south of Ireland the Home Rulers, and in the north the Unionists, are elected inevitably, and there is no change and no scope for the varying majorities.

1238. Before we leave that point, do you believe that any proportional system which could be introduced would redress that anomaly in Ireland, and would enable, say, the Unionists in the South of Ireland to obtain representation?—It would tend in that direction.

1239. But the constituencies would have to be very large indeed?—The constituencies would have to be very large. I am not prepared with figures. I would not like to speak to the circumstances of Ireland because I do not know them; but I should expect that if you could combine half a dozen counties so as to make a constituency of seven or nine members in Ireland, you might in the South get a representation; the preponderance, however, is so great that it is much more difficult to represent a minority in Ireland than it is to give the different parties fair representation in Great Britain.

1240. (Sir Courtenay Herbert.) Yet I suppose the need is greater in Ireland?—The need is greater. If I might refer to the result of the 1886 election, which seems contrary to what I have been stating as to the principle of the exaggeration of the majority, the result was stated by Lord Courtney as if it was an exception to the rule; but I think Lord Courtney did not quite realise that he was dealing with two different things—with Great Britain and with Ireland. If you take Great Britain alone, the principle that I have stated applies. It is only when you bring in Ireland, where a different state of things prevails, that you get the anomalous effect of a majority of Liberal voters and a majority of Conservative members. I have here the pamphlet of Mr. Rooke Corbett, who has worked out in a convenient form the figures for the last six elections. I should like to put in a table in which I have summarised his results. Mr. Corbett calls one side Liberal and the other Conservative, so I have adhered to his nomenclature:—

GREAT BRITAIN.

Note.—The figures in italics are in all cases percentages.

Year.	Votes (000 omitted).		Members Elected.		Theoretical Result. (Formula A ³ : B ³ .)	
	L.	C.	L.	C.	L.	C.
1885	2,179	1,880	329	238	346	221
	<i>53.7</i>	<i>46.3</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>39</i>
1886	1,728	1,904	199	368	238	329
	<i>47.5</i>	<i>52.5</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>58</i>
1892	2,126	2,123	277	290	284	283
	<i>50</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>50</i>

Year.	Votes (000 omitted).		Members Elected.		Theoretical Result. (Formula A ³ : B ³ .)	
	L.	C.	L.	C.	L.	C.
1895	2,044	2,325	178	389	228	339
	<i>46.8</i>	<i>53.2</i>	<i>31.5</i>	<i>68.5</i>	<i>40.2</i>	<i>59.8</i>
1900	2,073	2,403	186	381	221	346
	<i>46.3</i>	<i>53.7</i>	<i>32.8</i>	<i>67.2</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>61</i>
1906	3,094	2,350	428	139	394	173
	<i>56.8</i>	<i>43.2</i>	<i>75.5</i>	<i>24.5</i>	<i>69.5</i>	<i>30.5</i>
Mean	<i>50.2</i>	<i>49.8</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>50.3</i>	<i>49.7</i>

Of course always in working out figures of any elections you have the arguable question of what you are to do in the case of uncontested elections. One man treats them in one way, and another man treats them in another way. Mr. Corbett treats them on one system, and Sir Athelstane Baines in a paper read before the Statistical Society treats them on a somewhat different one. I do not know that it makes any difference on what principle you treat them as long as you treat them on the same principle in each election. The above table gives particulars of the last six elections in which the same principle has been used by the statistician as to the unopposed votes. The result of the election of 1886 in Great Britain was that the number of Conservative votes was 1,904,000, and the number of Liberal votes 1,728,000. That means that the Conservatives had 52.4 per cent. of the votes against 47.6 per cent. for the Liberals. The Conservatives had 368 members against 199 Liberal members. That is, 65 per cent. of the representation was obtained as the result of 52.4 per cent. of the votes. That is the exaggerated majority that I have spoken of. But in Ireland, the votes which are called here Liberal votes—because it is no use discriminating between Liberals and Home Rulers for this purpose—were 376,000, and there were 144,000 Conservative votes. That is a majority of 230,000. If you had taken those 230,000 voters and scattered them at random through Great Britain, the result would have been something enormously different. It would have been certain to give the Liberals a big majority. But they are all concentrated in comparatively few districts, and therefore have not the same effect that they would have if they were scattered through all the English and Scottish constituencies where there are a lot of small majorities. Lord Eversley is puzzled by it in this memorandum which is before me, but he does not quite see the reason. The fact is that the case is exactly the case which he states, assuming that it is an impossible case to happen. After questioning Lord Courtney's figures, which I believe are perfectly correct, and after saying he thinks there must be something wrong, he goes on to say: "I will, however, admit that it is conceivable that a case might occur under our present system in which a minority of voters might return a majority of members. If, for instance, in rather less than one-half of the constituencies one of the two parties should have a very large majority of votes in a general election, and in rather less than one-half the constituencies the other party should have a very small majority, it is conceivable that the minority of the whole voters might return a majority of members, but it is extremely unlikely that such a case will occur, especially when the constituencies consist almost wholly of one-membered districts, as is now

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[Continued.]

what was to be gained by a member being in touch with a smaller district in the way he can be in the case of a single-member constituency, and my feelings cooled towards proportional representation; but of late, in view of the extremely violent swings of the pendulum from one side to the other, I have again come to feel that proportional representation is necessary in this country.

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[Continued.]

losses of the two parties average—that the minority gains in one place what it loses in another. If the parties are distributed tolerably at random throughout the country and are not all concentrated into separate districts—which, of course, is the condition of things in England, and, though not quite so much, is still so to a very fair amount in Scotland, and again, though not quite so much, is still so within reason in Wales, but not at all so in Ireland—the theory of chance applies pretty well, and what that theory would give you is the overwhelming preponderance of the party in the majority. That is what the experience of recent general elections shows. I will give the facts for Great Britain. I leave out Ireland, for this reason: the majorities there are so great that the balance is not sensitive at all. In the south of Ireland the Home Rulers, and in the north the Unionists, are elected inevitably, and there is no change and no scope for the varying majorities.

1238. Before we leave that point, do you believe that any proportional system which could be introduced would redress that anomaly in Ireland, and would enable, say, the Unionists in the South of Ireland to obtain representation?—It would tend in that direction.

1239. But the constituencies would have to be very large indeed?—The constituencies would have to be very large. I am not prepared with figures. I would not like to speak to the circumstances of Ireland because I do not know them; but I should expect that if you could combine half a dozen counties so as to make a constituency of seven or nine members in Ireland, you might in the South get a representation; the preponderance, however, is so great that it is much more difficult to represent a minority in Ireland than it is to give the different parties fair representation in Great Britain.

1240. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) Yet I suppose the need is greater in Ireland?—The need is greater. If I might refer to the result of the 1886 election, which seems contrary to what I have been stating as to the principle of the exaggeration of the majority, the result was stated by Lord Courtney as if it was an exception to the rule; but I think Lord Courtney did not quite realise that he was dealing with two different things—with Great Britain and with Ireland. If you take Great Britain alone, the principle that I have stated applies. It is only when you bring in Ireland, where a different state of things prevails, that you get the anomalous effect of a majority of Liberal voters and a majority of Conservative members. I have here the pamphlet of Mr. Rooke Corbett, who has worked out in a convenient form the figures for the last six elections. I should like to put in a table in which I have summarised his results. Mr. Corbett calls one side Liberal and the other Conservative, so I have adhered to his nomenclature:—

GREAT BRITAIN.

Note.—The figures in italics are in all cases percentages.

Year.	Votes (000 omitted).		Members Elected.		Theoretical Result. (Formula A ² : B ² .)	
	L.	C.	L.	C.	L.	C.
1885 .	2,179	1,880	329	238	346	221
	<i>53·7</i>	<i>46·3</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>39</i>
1886 .	1,728	1,904	199	368	238	329
	<i>47·6</i>	<i>52·5</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>58</i>
1892 .	2,126	2,123	277	290	284	283
	<i>50</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>50</i>

Year.	Votes (000 omitted).		Members Elected.		Theoretical Result. (Formula A ² : B ² .)	
	L.	C.	L.	C.	L.	C.
1895 .	2,044	2,325	178	389	228	389
	<i>46·8</i>	<i>53·2</i>	<i>31·5</i>	<i>68·5</i>	<i>40·2</i>	<i>59·8</i>
1900 .	2,073	2,403	186	381	221	346
	<i>46·3</i>	<i>53·7</i>	<i>32·8</i>	<i>67·2</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>61</i>
1906 .	3,094	2,350	428	139	394	173
	<i>56·8</i>	<i>43·2</i>	<i>75·5</i>	<i>24·5</i>	<i>69·5</i>	<i>30·5</i>
Mean .	<i>50·2</i>	<i>49·8</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>50·3</i>	<i>49·7</i>

Of course always in working out figures of any elections you have the arguable question of what you are to do in the case of uncontested elections. One man treats them in one way, and another man treats them in another way. Mr. Corbett treats them on one system, and Sir Athelstane Baines in a paper read before the Statistical Society treats them on a somewhat different one. I do not know that it makes any difference on what principle you treat them as long as you treat them on the same principle in each election. The above table gives particulars of the last six elections in which the same principle has been used by the statistician as to the unopposed votes. The result of the election of 1886 in Great Britain was that the number of Conservative votes was 1,904,000, and the number of Liberal votes 1,728,000. That means that the Conservatives had 52·4 per cent. of the votes against 47·6 per cent. for the Liberals. The Conservatives had 368 members against 199 Liberal members. That is, 65 per cent. of the representation was obtained as the result of 52·4 per cent. of the votes. That is the exaggerated majority that I have spoken of. But in Ireland, the votes which are called here Liberal votes—because it is no use discriminating between Liberals and Home Rulers for this purpose—were 376,000, and there were 144,000 Conservative votes. That is a majority of 230,000. If you had taken those 230,000 voters and scattered them at random through Great Britain, the result would have been something enormously different. It would have been certain to give the Liberals a big majority. But they are all concentrated in comparatively few districts, and therefore have not the same effect that they would have if they were scattered through all the English and Scottish constituencies where there are a lot of small majorities. Lord Eversley is puzzled by it in this memorandum which is before me, but he does not quite see the reason. The fact is that the case is exactly the case which he states, assuming that it is an impossible case to happen. After questioning Lord Courtney's figures, which I believe are perfectly correct, and after saying he thinks there must be something wrong, he goes on to say: "I will, however, admit that it is conceivable that a case might occur under our present system in which a minority of voters might return a majority of members. If, for instance, in rather less than one-half of the constituencies one of the two parties should have a very large majority of votes in a general election, and in rather less than one-half the constituencies the other party should have a very small majority, it is conceivable that the minority of the whole voters might return a majority of members, but it is extremely unlikely that such a case will occur, especially when the constituencies consist almost wholly of one-membered districts, as is now

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"the case." If, instead of saying "in one half the constituencies" you say "the constituencies of Ireland," and, instead of the other half, you say "the constituencies of Britain," the case that happened in 1886 is exactly the case that Lord Eversley dismisses as extremely unlikely. Therefore, if you want to examine the working of single-member constituencies in a country where parties are pretty nearly equally divided, you should leave out the figures of Ireland altogether. That is what I have done in this table which is before you, and if you look at that table you will see that the exaggeration of the majority is equally true whichever side, whether Liberals or Conservatives, are in a majority in a general election. Curiously enough, if you take these six general elections, the mean of the votes is almost exactly the same for the two parties. There have been three elections in which the Liberals prevailed and three elections in which the Conservatives prevailed. If you take the mean of those six elections you find that the percentage of Liberal votes is 50·2 per cent., and the mean of the Conservative votes is 49·8, which shows how extraordinarily evenly the fluctuations of the different elections balance each other. If you take the mean of the members elected, the mean percentage of Liberals elected in these six elections has been 47, and of Conservatives 53. That goes to show that the division of the country into constituencies gives a certain, though not a large, amount of advantage to the Conservative Party.

1241. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It has been suggested, I understand, that at a particular general election—I think that of 1886—a minority of electors returned a majority of representatives. Is that so? Do you agree with that suggestion or not?—I agree, if you include Ireland, it is the case; but I have just tried to explain that in dealing with the theory of single-member constituencies you have to leave out Ireland.

1242. Yes; but one of the criticisms made on the existing system of elections was that there was a possibility of a minority of electors returning a majority of representatives, and that it has actually happened in 1886. Would you agree with that or not?—I should say that the possibility only occurred from the system of single-member constituencies not having fair play because of the concentration of voters in a particular district.

1243. (*Lord Lochee.*) In Ireland?—Yes, in Ireland. I should say it practically could not occur in any country where the division of opinion was more equal.

1244. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) With a system of redistribution?—No. What I said in the first place was that for the reasonable working of a single-member district system you must postulate a country nearly equally divided in opinion. Ireland is not. Therefore Ireland, if you think of it by itself, becomes a place where the single-member system would be impossible. It would not be representative at all in the sense of giving any voice to anybody except the overwhelming majority.

1245. That is to say, the case for proportional representation would be strengthened if Ireland had Home Rule?—Well, I think you can put it how you like in regard to that.

1246. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) But as far as Great Britain is concerned this argument for proportional representation that the minority may return a majority of members, you do not think is potent?—No.

1247. And therefore proportional representation could only affect that as applied to Ireland?—What resulted in 1886 in the minority of voters returning a majority of members was an instance of unintentional and inevitable gerrymandering, to use an old phrase. Everybody knows that you can, by a judicious arrangement of boundaries, divide up a district so that the minority may return a majority, if you have sufficient skill in the people who are laying down the division of districts.

1248. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It is quite clear that by ingenious gerrymandering you can make a minority return a majority of representatives?—No doubt.

1249. But the point I want to bring out is this: It has been urged as an objection to the single-member system that under it a minority of electors may return a majority of representatives, and that this actually

happened in 1886. Your answer would be that that may have happened in 1886, but that is not a necessary incident of single-member representation?—That is my answer; and, if you want to watch the working of single-member representation in a scientific way, you must treat Ireland separately. It is one thing what effect it produces in Ireland, and it is a totally different question what effect it produces in Great Britain, and you only confuse a scientific examination of the question by mixing the two. In Ireland single-member districts return a solid mass of Home Rulers in the south and Unionists in the north. It is for you to say whether that is desirable or not. In Great Britain it has a different effect. It returns the two parties in a proportion which I am wishing to point out to you bears a certain definite relation to the proportion of voters, though it is not identical with it. I do not know whether I need go through the Table.

1250. (*Chairman.*) We all have the Table. The only election where the actual result approximated to the theoretical result is the election of 1892?—In 1892, of course, the votes in Great Britain were almost exactly equally divided.

1251. And their representatives were almost equally divided, too?—Yes. In each of the other elections you will see that the party who had the majority of the electors got a very greatly exaggerated majority of the members.

1252. (*Lord Lochee.*) By "electors" you mean actual voters?—I meant actual voters, of course. I should not have used the word "electors." I meant actual votes given. In 1885 the Liberals had 53·7 per cent. of the voters and they had 58 per cent. of the members. In 1886 it was reversed: the Conservatives had 52·5 per cent. of the voters and had a majority of nearly 2 to 1 (65 per cent. against 35 per cent.) of the members. In 1892 the voters were nearly exactly equal in Great Britain, and the Conservatives had just a slight advantage in the number of members. In 1895 the Conservatives polled 53·2 per cent. of the votes and got 68·5 of the members, that is more than two to one. In 1900 they polled a trifle more—53·7 of the votes—and they got 67·2 of the members, again fully two to one.

1253. (*Chairman.*) Although they polled more votes they had fewer members?—Yes, you cannot get exact uniformity or proportionality in these things. In 1906 the Liberals had the greatest majority of any. The Liberals only had 56·8 of the votes, but they got 75·5 of the representation, that is, more than three to one. That shows you the very constant excess proportion. I may say in a parenthesis that that is not a thing that depends at all on the constituencies being of different sizes. It would not be affected by a redistribution that made every constituency of exactly the same size. It is just as likely to be true if some constituencies are bigger and some smaller as it is if they are all uniform; but that is not what it depends on. I think I may give an illustration that would make it obvious what I mean. Supposing you had a great box—a great bin of marbles of two colours, red and blue—and supposing one sort is in a majority. Supposing there are 11,000 blue marbles and 9,000 red marbles all stirred up in the box together; it is quite obvious that if you put in your hand without looking and draw out one, the chance that you would get a blue marble would be 11 to 9. The marbles are the electorate, each marble representing a voter. But supposing you take out a whole shovelful of the marbles, then it is quite clear, if the marbles are effectively mixed all through the box, the chances are that the distribution of marbles in the shovel corresponds to the distribution of marbles in the whole box. Therefore the chance is much greater, if you take out a shovelful and then count the blue and the red marbles, that the majority of marbles will be the same as the majority of the whole number than when you pick out a single marble. Supposing you take out the whole box and spread them out and count them, then we know the majority would be the blue majority, 11,000 against 9,000, *ex hypothesi*. If you divide it into two halves the chance that each half would have a majority of the blue would be enormous. If you took out a quarter, or just a big shovelful, the chance would still be consider-

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ably larger than the chance in regard to one single marble. You can call a shovelful a constituency. You can dig out shovelfuls of different sizes, call them constituencies, count the number of blue and red balls in each of them, and let each side score one for the number of shovelfuls in which it has a majority. I have been going into the mathematics of it, if you are willing to take it from me, and the chances of a single marble being drawn blue is 11 to 9; but the chance of a whole shovelful having a blue majority is something very near 2 to 1. I have had the help in working this of my friend Major Macmahon, who is one of the leading mathematicians of the day, and he gives me this as the formula: that if the electors are in the ratio of A to B, then the members will be at least in the ratio of A^3 to B^3 . That is to say, in the present case, if the electors are as 11 to 9, then the members will be in the ratio of 11^3 to 9^3 . That is not quite 2 to 1, but rather less. This formula applies when the two parties are nearly equally divided. If there is any great disparity, the exaggeration of the majority increases at a much more rapid rate. There is a rather interesting mathematical corollary which I state as a mathematical fact. I am not prepared to put it forward as a practical political suggestion. If you want from a system of single-member constituencies to get proportional representation, you should allow the constituencies to vote in the first place as at present and get their members, and then each party should be allowed to co-opt half the number of the opposing party. The majority should be allowed to co-opt half the number of the minority, and the minority should be allowed to co-opt half the number of the majority; that is to say, at the last election, when there were 428 Liberals and 139 Conservatives returned, if you had wanted to bring that to a proportional representation of the voters, you should have allowed the Conservative minority to co-opt 214.

1254. (*Lord Lochee*.) What does "co-opt" mean?—To add to themselves.

1255. Select new members?—Select new members.

1256. Having to choose out of the party?—Choose out of their defeated friends. The triumphant majority should have been allowed to choose and add to itself 70.

1257. The result being?—Instead of being 428 to 139, it would have been 498 to 353.

1258. That would give the true proportion?—It would come near true proportion. I do not state this as a proposal which is likely to be accepted, but it is an interesting illustration of what would be needed if you really wanted to bring back the single-member election to a proportional figure. This third pair of columns on my Table is what I worked out as a theoretical result according to Major Macmahon's formula. You will see that the actual result in nearly every case shows a greater discrepancy in favour of the majority than Major Macmahon's formula gives. I think that shows that instead of the theory of chance giving too great an advantage, the practical considerations that come into an election and make a difference between electors and marbles tell in favour of exaggerating the majority and not in the direction of diminishing it.

1259. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu*.) How exactly do you mean you have got the figures in the third column?—These figures in the third column are working out the ratio A^3 to B^3 .

1260. It is not the proportion that the two parties are entitled to on the votes?—No.

1261. But what they ought to have got?—If the formula had been right it is what they would have got, but not what they are entitled to get proportionally, because that is the percentage in the first column. I may say that, besides this investigation of Major Macmahon, Professor Edgeworth made a quite independent investigation with a corresponding result which appears in the Statistical Society's Journal for September 1898, at page 539. You will see his statement there to a similar effect.

1262. (*Chairman*.) Your contention is that the system gives the majority an abnormal number?—Yes, that is my contention. The question of whether you desire the majority should have an abnormal advantage is another matter; but what I say is that you have to

reckon with the fact that the single-member system does give the majority of the electors an abnormal advantage.

1263. From a proportional point of view, do you consider the smaller parties of the State do not get at the present time any representation?—I do and I do not. I think the small section who change their views produce a great deal of effect, an exaggerated effect, a much greater effect than the great mass of people whose views are fixed and remain the same.

1264. You illustrate, for instance, the Confederates and the Free Fooders?—Yes, I can take that as an illustration. Perhaps before I get to that I might say that I think these great Parliamentary majorities which we have are an exaggerated and distorted representation of things, and that they are stereotyped in a way that does not correspond to reality, and I cannot believe that that is essential to good government; I think it has the effect of making the parties always emphasise the points of difference which separate them from the other side. -I think if we believed a quarter of what we are always saying about the other side we should not be willing to go on with a system which gives us one day an enormous majority, but gives the other side, when circumstances change, an equally overwhelming majority. We should want to have something which would give more power to the stable mass of central opinion. My next objection to single-member constituencies is that I think you are liable to such very great influence from a small but fanatical section in your constituency. You are fighting a close fight, and you are told that there are a couple of hundred voters who attach the utmost importance to some mere fad, and that their vote will be determined by that. The temptation is overwhelming to meet those faddists. In that way any organisation that can command a limited number of votes in a great many constituencies obtains a Parliamentary power, by bringing pressure to bear upon the candidates in those constituencies, very far beyond what it deserves. Under a transferable vote system, if you were having a big constituency, I think an ordinary sensible candidate could afford to neglect fads and go for the support of the great mass of his party. Probably, in an election for Glasgow you would have one man who would take up one particular fad and another man who would seek to represent some other fad, but the man who had his eye on the main issue and who did not care about fads would be able far more safely to appeal to the great bulk of his party to support him.

1265. Do you consider it an advantage that a small group of faddists should have a chance of obtaining a representative of their own?—Then I think they would have a chance of obtaining a representative of their own, and I quite approve of that, if they are strong enough.

1266. Who would be independent of the bigger parties in the State?—Yes, who would sit loose to the bigger parties in the State. I think it would be a far more wholesome thing if, instead of having the widespread pledges of a great many members, you had three or four men who were known to be representatives of a particular interest.

1267. But, as an actual matter of fact, does not that obtain now? In the House of Commons of recent years have not certain members been definitely associated with one particular idea?—That is so with regard to ideas that have a local habitation. For example, in regard to railway men or miners. But take such an interest as the postmen or policemen, who are found in limited numbers in every constituency. If they choose to assert themselves and to use their votes for obtaining political power, the fact that there are 100 postmen in every constituency, and that so many elections are closely divided, would enable them to get pledges from a very large number of members of the House of Commons. It is a body of that kind which has the opportunity of bringing pressure to bear upon every candidate through the whole of the three kingdoms. I do not, in the least, want to discuss whether their claims are legitimate or illegitimate. That is not the point. The point is that you have a particular body—like the postmen, like the telegraph clerks, like the

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schoolmasters, like any other body which has an organisation spread through the whole country—and assuming it able to command a limited number of votes in each constituency, it would have a power over members of Parliament far greater than its proportional numbers.

1268. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You do not think those block votes balance one another at all, and can be set off one against another in constituencies now?—You mean small bodies such as I have suggested?

1269. Yes?—In a way they probably average each other, but I do not think you can trust to their doing so. Some of them are directly counter to each other. For example, you have the ultra-temperance vote and the licensed trade vote; the one can be set off against the other. But there is a great number of this class of votes which there is nothing to set off against. For example, if the postmen want certain advantages, it is no particular interest of the rest of the community to oppose the postmen. There is no other small section resolved to take away from you their vote if you give the postmen what they want. There is nothing to balance the postmen, and nothing to balance these different sections. I am expressing no opinion whatever as to the merits of the postmen's claim, but I am stating the fact that the single-member system does give them a very great power.

1270. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You think the adoption of the proportional representation system would weaken the influence of certain special interests, such as the postmen or railway men?—I do.

1271. But would it affect such interests or causes as the temperance or the trade interest?—I think you would find, probably, the temperance, or larger interests like that, strong enough to command a candidate who would primarily devote himself to them. I think you would probably find in a big constituency, a city like Glasgow, if you were running that on proportional lines, as a single constituency, in each party one or two men who would come forward as very strong temperance men, and one or two men who would be standing with considerable sympathies with the licensed trade.

1272. You would have a temperance candidate or a Trade candidate, but you do not think you would have a railway candidate or a post office candidate or Labour candidate, because they shade into each other?—They shade into each other. You would doubtless have one or more Labour candidates. The railway men are quite capable of judging where they have a chance of running a man of their own, and in such places would take a man whose sympathies were specially and strongly railway. In the same way the post office people would look out for their own opportunities, and the other kinds of Civil servants would do the same.

1273. (*Chairman.*) Of course, that is done to a certain extent now. School teachers now run candidates?—Yes. I think it would be a much more wholesome thing if the school teachers had more men of their own in the House of Commons rather than pledges out of every candidate throughout the country.

1274. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You would want a very large constituency, of course, to bring that about—almost a national constituency?—It is entirely a question of degree. You would find probably in some particular districts the interest strong, and there it would concentrate its strength; in other districts it would have to support a man who had other claims. But the opportunity for that kind of thing would be much greater if you had constituencies of seven or nine than it is at present. I would also put it in this way, that the pressure upon the men who did not seek to interest themselves particularly in that one interest would be much less, which is a point I regard as often more important.

1275. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You would have more special representatives for special interests, but fewer party men who had given pledges in favour of special interests?—Precisely. The third objection I have to our single-member system is the excessive pressure which it creates for party conformity. The party wants in each constituency the man elected who swallows the whole party ticket, and puts on its full pressure to get that. The result is that it is extraordinarily difficult for a man who differs from his party

on any important question, or any vital question, to get himself elected. I think the best illustration of that is what has been going on lately between the parties who are known as the "confederates" and the "free fooders." Here again I wish to speak purely scientifically and clinically, and I am expressing no opinion of my own on the matter at all. But the position is this: There are a certain number in the Unionist party—a minority—who differ on the vital question of tariff reform, and who are free fooders. The newspapers state that there were a certain number of people who are called confederates, who were determined that not one of those Unionist free fooders should go into the House of Commons. The Unionist free fooders retorted: "Very well, if we cannot get into the House of Commons we will throw our votes against tariff reformers, and we shall be able to produce an entirely disproportionate effect by so doing." I think it is perfectly true that they could. I think they did in 1906, and I think they could, if they chose, do it at another election. A comparatively small section of a party, by throwing its vote against its party, could produce a quite disproportionate number of losses to its party on the principle that I have just stated of the exaggerated effect the majority has. But, on the other hand, they cannot command any seats for themselves because nearly everywhere they are in a small minority. If they get in it is owing to personal accident or personal claims. Both those policies are within the rules of the game, and you cannot complain of them, but I think both are equally mischievous. I think it is a great misfortune that a small number of discontented members of a party can ruin the party. I think it is an equally great misfortune that an important section of a party cannot get representation in the House of Commons. I think that the single-member system results in both those things. I want to see a system of big constituencies where the Unionist free fooder can come forward, and if he can get the necessary fraction of his party to put his name first, he will be one of the men who is elected. The Unionist free fooder would not have to abandon all his other principles. He could say "I vote for F. F., and if F. F. does not get a chance then I vote for the other members of the Unionist party." At present he is put to the alternative of either supporting a man he differs from on an important point or else voting against his party altogether.

1276. (*Chairman.*) Of the various systems that have been suggested, do you consider the single transferable vote the best?—Yes, I think there is a great deal to be said for the list system which they have in Belgium, but it is not familiar at all to people here. I should like very much to see it tried in a school board election, for instance, and I think it would be appropriate to the school board election.

1277. Our inquiry deals with parliamentary elections only, but you would be prepared to extend the system of transferable voting to local elections—county councils and so on?—Certainly.

1278. Would you prefer that the system should be started on municipal and county council elections?—Yes, I think it would be a way of familiarising people's minds with the thing. You have in Scotland still the cumulative vote applied to the school boards, which is not satisfactory. I think the Belgian list system would produce the effect of the cumulative vote much more satisfactorily. It has the advantage, too, of being a good deal simpler than the transferable vote, and the great advantage that the selection within the party is made by the members of the party itself, and not made by opponents.

1279. You do not think that would be putting too much power into the hands of the party organisations or wire-pullers?—No, I do not. I think it is their business to see that they make a list which is acceptable to the party. I think when you consider how the voting goes under the cumulative system in a big list of 30 names for a school board, it really is taking the list of the party. At the same time the list system is not familiar to people in this country.

1280. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) We are just on the border of the scope of the Inquiry, but would you say

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there is a stronger case for applying the system of proportional representation to local elections than to parliamentary elections, or would not you care to express an opinion on that point?—I would say there is a good deal less difficulty to be overcome in doing it. I will put it in that way. I think the case is very strong for both.

1281. So that if the experiment is to be made you would prefer it to be begun there?—I think it would be much easier to begin it there. I think there would be much less prejudice and objection to be overcome by applying it there, and therefore I think as a practical way of getting the ideas accepted, it is a good plan to begin in the school board and municipal elections.

1282. (*Chairman.*) Would you be prepared to have the system tried in the big boroughs like Glasgow, Manchester, and Liverpool as a preliminary?—Yes, I think the big cities are the places where it would be most appropriate—to make a city like Edinburgh or Glasgow or Liverpool vote as a whole. I do not feel it necessary to divide the whole country on the same system at all. I think in many what are practically urban districts, like Lancashire or Lanarkshire, you can make up constituencies of seven or nine, but I think it would be quite impossible to lump the whole Highlands into one constituency. A man has quite enough to do in making himself acquainted with Inverness-shire or Ross-shire, and I do not see any reason why you should force a larger constituency. I think it would make redistribution far more easy than any other system, because you would have so much more latitude in making things fall into natural groups.

1283. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) There is one point on the earlier part of your evidence. You say there are two postulates of the single-member system, first, that there must be two parties only, and, secondly, that they must be nearly equally divided, and I understood you to say that, unless those two postulates are granted, the single-member system will not work?—No.

1284. Is not that putting it rather too strongly? Do not you mean that it will not work satisfactorily?—It will not work satisfactorily. Of course, it has got to work.

1285. Surely neither of those postulates apply in France, Germany, or several other countries, where the single-member system prevails and works after a fashion?—After a fashion.

1286. Neither in France nor in Germany have you two parties only, and in neither two parties equally divided?—In France you are finding just now very great objections to attempting single-member elections with three parties. For example, I do not know whether you noticed that this last affair in the Chamber was owing to a Socialist member who had been recently elected for Uzès and was supposed to have been supported by Conservative votes, being called, as a nick-name, M. le Duc—le Duc d'Uzès; and feeling arose out of that.

1287. There are many more than three parties there?—Yes; what I mean is that the great disadvantage of the single-member district, with more than two parties, is that you make the man who is chosen, the choice, not of his friends, but of his opponents.

1288. I do not quite follow that?—When you have three parties, say, either you have the thing divided and the representative of the minority getting in, or if you try to remedy that by a second ballot, or by such schemes as Mr. Dundas White's Bill or Mr. Robertson's Bill, the effect is that you give the choice between two parties to the members of the third party.

1289. That is to say, the member who is elected is elected by a combination of parties?—Yes.

1290. It is not more than that?—Except that it often may be a choice of dislikes.

1291. That is to say, the man who is elected is not the man who is most liked, but the man who is least disliked?—Exactly.

1292. Is there any great harm in that?—I think it opens the door to a vast amount of intrigue.

1293. You said there was another objection to the present system, which was the excessive power of the balancing elector, and you described how the balancing elector gives disproportionate power to a small fanatical

section; but is not there another form of balancing elector whom we hear sometimes spoken of as the moderate non-party man?—Certainly.

1294. Is not it often said that the turn-over depends on his attitude?—Certainly, that is so. You have to remember that there are the moderate men who are capable of shifting from one side to another, as well as the extreme men.

1295. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Could you sketch a little more in detail for us the practical scheme of proportional representation which you would wish applied to Great Britain?—In the first place, I would take the cities, which are, perhaps, the easiest, and their surroundings. I would make them into single constituencies, going up to, say, 9 or 11 members.

1296. But not less than what?—Not less than three. So far as may be, I would make them from 5 to 11. But where the natural distribution does not give you as many as five, I think the thing would work very fairly well in three-member constituencies, though, of course, the larger the constituency the nearer you get to proportional representation. Then the closely populated manufacturing and country districts you would make into constituencies of much the same size. Then you have the other element to look at—a geographical area of scattered units. As I said, taking a county like Inverness or Ross, you would leave those.

1297. Dumbarton was instanced to us, by the member for the county, as being very unsuitable for proportional representation?—I should rather differ. I should say that Dumbarton would be pretty much on the average. I think, if you take Stirlingshire, Dumbartonshire, and the small corner of Renfrew which is north of the Clyde, which has now become an extremely populous district, with the burghs included in these counties, you would make an area quite suitable for a four or five-member constituency.

1298. Then, in your scheme of redistribution, do I understand that you would not apportion more than 11 members to a constituency, or as many?—My ideal number, perhaps, for a large constituency would be nine; but I should be guided by local conditions, and if I found that Glasgow, for instance, deserved according to its population 11, 12, or 13 members, I should not think it a fatal objection. I should think it better to increase the number of members a trifle rather than cut Glasgow into two artificial halves.

1299. Do you think that in the case, say, of a seven-member constituency the tendency would be to support the party ticket on each side? We will assume this sort of thing would happen. You would have your Unionist agency and your Radical agency, and each of them would put three or four candidates into the field, and each of them we assume would circularise the electorate and send post-cards bearing the three or four names of the party ticket to every elector; do you think the tendency on the part of the electorate would be to vote as directed, or to exercise some larger discretion?—I think where they knew the men they would exercise a good deal of discretion. It would not be necessary for the party to object to the discretion. The party can quite well leave the elector to his choice between the men who are going to support the party, and I think you would find that the men who in previous years had made themselves known in Glasgow would have each their own set of people who respected them and would put them at the head of the list; while, at the same time, they would be quite ready to support the other members on the party ticket.

1300. The difficulty I feel is this: if the organisations are going to be successful in controlling the votes of the electorate on one side and the other, and to compel in a sense voting on party lines, then I do not see that the outside man—the free footer and so forth—is going to gain very much by proportional representation. On the other hand, if the party machines are to lose their power of controlling the result of the election, and what we call the moderate independent candidate is going to get a very much better run for his money, then it would seem that as the result of the election you have a weak executive, because parties will be so very much cut up. The question is: which is the best opinion, and which way is it going to work?—After all, it is very

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much a matter of opinion and judgment, where no one can be certain. Party feeling is an immensely strong motive, and party organisers are extremely clever people who will do their best to get the fullest advantage out of whatever the system happens to be. I think they get more strength out of the present system than they would out of the proportional representation system, because I feel that the elector will have wider choice open and will exercise it. Take the position of a man like myself. I am well known in Glasgow in all the constituencies that I have not stood for, where I am not standing for, and could not stand for. Supposing there was an election, and I was appearing as a candidate for Glasgow, I should expect to get the support of a large body of men who have known me for a great many years in all the different parts of Glasgow, and should expect to get that support whether the party happened to put my name first, second, third, or fourth on the list.

1301. But if they did not put it on at all?—I think a man who has got any position and is known in politics would be quite strong enough to put himself forward if the party did not put him forward, which he cannot do nowadays. In the single-member constituencies he has to get the party nomination. But, of course, the party would be anxious to get the greatest possible strength it could, and would gather together men of different shades and colour if they thought thereby they would catch different votes. At present they have to fit one man into each hole, and they have to make him acceptable to the great majority of the party, and they cannot trouble their heads about fine shades. If it was a question of electing nine members for Glasgow, each side would probably run half a dozen candidates—the Liberals and the Unionists—and then there would be room in that half-dozen for men of different opinions, between whom the electors could take their choice, and the ordinary party man says: "I prefer A to B, but I would rather have either A or B than X or Y."

1302. Then on the balance your opinion is that a system of proportional representation would affect the solidarity of the party?—Yes, I think the party has too much solidarity at present.

1303. You would not fear the splitting up of parties in the House of Commons as being likely to weaken the power of executive government?—No, I should say the tendency would be to bring back the same comparative independence that you had in the days of Peel and Lord John Russell—in the days of, we will say, 70 years ago—when I think the ties of party were distinctly less rigid than they are at present; but party government went on with great success and the executive was strong enough.

1304. Do you think a majority of 50 is sufficient to maintain a party in power?—Certainly, because when you had a majority of that kind you would have to deal with people on both sides as being reasonable men.

1305. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) I gather you do not attach much importance to an objection that has been brought against the system of the transferable vote in large constituencies by some witnesses here, namely, that canvassing would become enormously difficult and enormously expensive in an area which elected, say, five or seven members?—No, I do not attach great importance to that, because I agree with what I heard Mr. Robertson give as his evidence the other day, that a man did all he could now.

1306. I was not here on that day?—I will state it in my own words. When you go in for an election you have to do all you can, and you put your energies into the part of the work that you think pays you best. Undoubtedly it would alter very materially the work that the candidate would do previous to the election, but I do not think it would be more exacting or more impossible than the work he has to actually do at the present time.

1307. I gather, in your opinion, the large constituency is an essential. You do not think very much would be gained by a simple alternative vote applied to single-member constituencies. Do you say there is nothing in that?—I do not say nothing, but I do not think it is worth doing for the sake of the single-member constituencies. It is suggested in some of the Bills as

a cure for the divided elections. I do not think much of it from that point of view. If you are going to have a three-party contest as the regular thing, then I think you will have to abandon the single-member system altogether; only I do think that the alternative vote as suggested is very much better than the second ballot which other people suggest.

1308. I gather you think we might begin by having large constituencies in a few towns, and then extend them afterwards to the country?—I think you might do that. The only thing that you would have to be very careful about in making a proposal of that sort is that you do not seem to be favouring one party at the expense of another. It would never do to have single-member districts in parts of the country where one side got the majority, and big districts where the other side did.

1309. In reply to the Chairman you seemed to me to think very favourably of the list system, but at the same time you think it is not practicable for England?—No, it is not so much in accordance with our ideas. It has not been familiarised. I am very much impressed with the advantages of the Belgian list system.

1310. Do you think it simpler than the transferable vote?—Much.

1311. Do you think there would be no chance of it being adopted, supposing it could be modified and different words used, and the idea of the list of candidates taken out?—There would be some difficulty in getting people to accept it. But I think it is so much in accordance with what people do in school board elections that it might have a fair chance of being accepted there, and then people would get familiar with its working.

1312. According to these Tables that we have here does it result that in 1892, supposing a system of proportional representation had been in practice, there would have been no majority at all, or hardly any?—It would have been very small. As it is, in Great Britain there was only a majority of 13.

1313. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) I gather that you think, say, in an urban constituency of seven or nine members, each party would undoubtedly prepare a very carefully arranged list of candidates?—A very careful list of candidates.

1314. On the whole you think that there would be a tendency by the party managers to be a bit more elastic and conciliatory in the character of their candidates?—Yes.

1315. But subject to that, every conceivable effort would be made to get a block vote for their list?—Certainly.

1316. Do you think it would go to the extent of their trying to get the electors to divide their first votes?—No, I do not think there would be any object in doing that. I think they would say: "Here are our six men. We do not want you to stop at one or two votes; we want you to express your first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth choice, but please yourself as to what order you do it in."

1317. Then you agree with Lord Courtney that it matters very little as to which order they put their men in, provided they vote for the party list?—Very little.

1318. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Lord Eversley took a different view?—I do not remember that point in his memorandum.

1319. He says: "With respect to the order of preference, it should be recollected that a first vote is worth at least double a second vote, and a second vote worth very much more than a third vote." Therefore, the order in the list would be of very considerable importance. Would you agree with that?—If the party is only going to get in one or two of its candidates, the first vote is, of course, worth a great deal more than the third or fourth vote, but I think that will be a thing that will have to be left to the electors. I do not see how a party can enforce an order, because each candidate will say for himself: "I am a loyal member of the party. I want you to support the whole party, but if you care for me I want you to put me up at the top." All you

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can expect of candidates is to urge on all the members of the party to vote for the whole ticket.

1320. We were told by Count Goblet d'Alviella that would not be considered playing the game in Belgium, and that candidates there were expected to urge the support of the party list in the party order. I do not know whether there would be such a feeling here?—That is where you take a list, and, as I understand from the Count, the list is made up by a preliminary vote by the members of the party.

1321. It is made up, I think, by the party agency after consulting the members of the party in an informal way. The names are arranged in a particular order, but each elector may, if he likes, give preference to a particular man on that list, and put him at the head of the list. In some cases that was done, but I think we gathered from Count Goblet that it was considered not quite creditable?—Yes.

1322. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) I suppose, for the purpose of the proportional ballot paper here, the names might be put in alphabetical order?—Certainly.

1323. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Say there are five Conservative candidates for Glasgow, in the process of sorting out and transferring votes under the proportional representation system, the men who come out at the bottom are the first to be sacrificed?—Yes.

1324. So that it really is of very considerable importance whether a man gets a considerable number of first votes or whether he does not?—Yes; of course if anybody has to be cut out of the list it is the man who has the fewest first votes.

1325. The instinct of self-preservation would induce each candidate in his appeals to the electors to struggle for as many first votes as he thought he could get?—Of course he would prefer the first vote. From the point of view of the party it makes no odds, but from the point of view of the individual it is a distinct advantage to be in front of other people. But you have to deal with human nature, and I do not think the difficulty is really greater in that way than the heart-burnings and jealousies that now go on as to who is to be chosen to be a candidate for a single-member constituency.

1326. I do not suggest it as a fatal objection. I only point out that it would seem to indicate that parties may attempt to sort or get the electors to sort the first votes, and give a certain number, as far as possible, to each man. For instance, one ward of a city would vote in one order—the Conservatives in one ward in Glasgow might be asked to vote in one order, and in another ward to vote in another order. It is a question whether that is likely or not?—That is a thing that has been done in times past under the three-corner vote so as to secure all three seats. It was done that way in Glasgow, and the three seats were secured under the three-cornered arrangement. It is a matter of speculation, and my judgment is it would not be done and that the men who were best known and had longest standing and were generally popular would get the first vote, and the organisation *quâd* organisation would wish to leave that to the electors.

1327. You mean public opinion would revolt from the machine to a certain extent?—I think so.

1328. Provided there were strong candidates?—Public opinion obeys the machine when the machine can say, "If you do not do what I tell you, you lose the seat altogether"; but if public opinion felt that as long as they voted for the whole number of names in whatever order they were not damaging the prospects of their party, I think they would insist on taking their own choice.

1329. But if the party could show or get the people to believe that the order was of enormous importance, and that the sorting of the first votes was of enormous importance, then it might lead to closer party discipline than ever—more elaborate machine arrangements than ever?—I should not have said so. I should have said, putting it at the worst, as elaborate as at present.

1330. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) Have you read the evidence that has been presented to the Commission?—Most of it.

1331. Did you read the evidence of Mr. Humphreys on the second day, when he gave us details of the method

of counting the votes according to Lord Courtney's scheme? They were dealing in the test election, which he was describing, with a matter of 21,000 votes. At question 214 I asked him what mathematical difference it made if he transferred a certain number of votes from the top of Mr. Asquith's pile rather than choose them proportionately, and he quoted the opinion of Professor Stokes, who told him that in dealing with numbers of that sort the element of chance was negligible. Is that your opinion in a matter of 21,000 votes?—Yes.

1332. How big a number of votes would it be necessary to deal with in order to make the element of chance negligible?—Twenty-five years ago I wrote a pamphlet about that, of which I should like to put in a copy.

1333. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Was this written before the change in the system of counting?—It was when the system of counting was under discussion. I made one proposal in this pamphlet of a system of counting, which is not the present one; but the argument of this pamphlet is that the element of chance is exceedingly small, but that if you are frightened of it you can wipe it out almost altogether or entirely if you take sufficient precautions. You can wipe it out sufficiently for practical purposes by taking certain precautions in the counting.

1334. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Do you know how they meet it in Tasmania?—I do not know.

1335. It is met, I fancy, in the way you suggest?—My argument is this, that if the votes could be absolutely mixed and taken at random, then it would scarcely matter at all how you did it. This was the result of a mathematical investigation I made at the time: "To state the matter more exactly, and as the result of an independent mathematical investigation"—that is after quoting Stokes and Andræ—"it appears that in the case we have stated, if 4,000 voting papers were drawn out of A's heap at random instead of the papers being carefully sorted and proportionately divided, the probability is that neither B nor C"—those are the two second choices—"would gain or lose more than 11 votes. In other words, it is just even betting that the number of A B votes in the 4,000 drawn would lie between 2,411 and 2,389 (inclusive), and consequently that the number of A C votes will lie between 1,589 and 1,611. The odds are more than 3 to 1 neither B nor C would gain or lose more than 20 votes, *i.e.*, that the number of A B votes drawn will lie between 2,420 and 2,380; more than 10 to 1 that neither would gain or lose more than 30 votes; just 50 to 1 that neither would gain or lose more than 40 votes; and about 2,000 to 1 that neither would gain or lose more than 60 votes. If the number of classes were larger or the number of vote to be drawn smaller, the effect would be much less. It will thus be seen that it is only in the case of very closely-contested elections that the element of chance can affect the result. It will also be observed that the *element of chance will not be of importance as between the different parties, but only as between different individual candidates of the same party*, since in almost all cases the electors who are agreed upon the candidate they most desire will also put for their second choice candidates of the same party."

1336. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) About the relative merits of two candidates A and B in a single transferable vote election when both candidates, A and B, have places on the majority of lists; A, let us say, is at the bottom on half the lists and at the top on the other half; and B is fifth on all the lists. Which, mathematically, is more representative of the opinions of the electorate?—I do not see that that is a question that can be answered or can be weighed. I think you have to take it that the ordinary man will be a party man, and will want to have his party list elected, and he will not very particularly care who the individuals are. It seems to me quite impossible to attach any fractional weight to successive preferences.

1337. Then from that answer we may infer that in your opinion, when this system is adopted, a voter will be far more influenced by party than the individual for

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whom he is voting?—No, I do not say that. I say he will have a view in favour of an individual, and will put that individual in the front, and that will probably influence the vote he gives first. But as between Nos. 4 and 5 on his party list, the odds are that he does not particularly care, and as regards the lower preferences I do not think you can attach any great importance. In fact, if it were possible, I would not mind stopping the number of preferences when you get to a certain number.

1338. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) On the ground that there would be a tendency to scatter at random the lower preferences?—Yes, or on the ground that you would be having people voting by the preferences for the men they least dislike rather than for the men they believe in, and I do not think that is a wholesome way of voting.

1339. I made a deduction, about the accuracy of which I am not quite sure, from the evidence you were giving us about the different position of Great Britain and Ireland with regard to the working of single-member constituencies. In Great Britain I think you said the Conservatives and the Liberals are more or less equally distributed throughout the country, and, therefore, single-member constituencies worked perfectly so far as there is little risk of the minority of electors obtaining a majority of members; but in Ireland they are not so distributed, and therefore single-member constituencies, regarding them in this light only, work so badly that it affects the result (taking the two countries together) in the whole country. This, I thought, from what you said, would show that proportional representation (in this regard only) was necessary particularly, if not entirely, in Ireland, where I think you said earlier you were doubtful whether it would affect any alteration in the representation?—In Ireland the predominance of the Nationalist party in the south is so great that I feel doubtful whether constituencies of any reasonable or practical size would let in Unionists. One cannot tell. The effect of the present system, of course, is that they are wiped out of political life altogether. Another suggestion in regard to it is that you would probably have as a result Nationalists of different types instead of one stereotyped type. But my point is that the circumstances of the case make the problem of Ireland quite a different problem to the problem of Great Britain. We, not for the first time, introduced gaily into Ireland a British system, a system we considered fitted to Great Britain, and we deemed what was appropriate for Great Britain would be appropriate for Ireland. I do not think it is. I think if you want to get hold of the real scientific working of the thing you will see the set of facts much more clearly before you if you confine your attention to England or to Great Britain than if you confuse the results by bringing in Ireland, where the circumstances are different.

1340. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) Supposing you have five candidates for Glasgow, and taking postmen—the example you gave—the larger the constituency the more postmen, or any particular party, there will be in it; yet there may not be sufficient of that party to run a postmen's candidate. Do not you then think each candidate who puts himself up, even under a system of single transferable vote, will equally, as now, desire the support of the postmen if he can obtain it?—No, it will not be so vital to him. Of course he desires the support of postmen, and will make all reasonable undertakings to get it, but the gaining of a particular hundred of votes will not be so important to him when he has got the whole of Glasgow to act and go upon, as in a single-member constituency, where he is told that those few votes will probably make the difference of the balance.

1341. You said, I think, that if this system was applied to municipal elections there would not be so much prejudice and objection to be overcome. Do you think there is much interest taken in this subject now amongst the electors generally?—I cannot say that I think there is.

1342. But you would anticipate considerable prejudice and objection if it became a live municipal question?—I think whenever you try to alter a system like our whole electoral system, you are bound to have in any change an enormous amount of prejudice and objection to overcome, and I think the function of this Commission is to examine more thoroughly than the ordinary elector can the ground there is for that prejudice and objection.

1343. There are a considerable number of electors still who are too illiterate to use certainly the present system of voting. You do not think there would be a larger number still who would be unable to cope with the transferable vote?—I do not think that has been found a difficulty. You have the provision for the illiterate voter. I do not think you could allow him to dictate a whole list, but you must remember that with a single transferable vote, if you only vote for one man without any transference at all your vote is perfectly good, and a man would need to be exceedingly stupid if he could not mention the name of one single person for whom he wanted his vote to be recorded.

1344. On the last page of your memorandum you say electors can be educated. It has been suggested by other witnesses that a very good method of educating them would be by adopting the alternative vote in a single-member constituency as a stepping-stone to proportional representation by way of accustoming the electors to it. Would you be prepared to support that view?—Yes, I think so. I do not see any harm in it. I do not see any great good to be got by the alternative vote in a single-member constituency, but I do not see any harm and should be quite prepared to introduce it largely with the object of accustoming people to the system.

1345. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) How would you deal with the difficulty of by-elections. It is a difficulty?—It is undoubtedly a difficulty. I hope by-elections will become less important in the future, because I think it is getting to be the general opinion that the duration of Parliaments should be shortened, and also that there should not be re-election on taking office. I think the only way you could deal with a by-election would be simply to take it as the election, for whatever constituency it was, for a single member. The minority must just take their chance if the man who dies happens to be the member of the minority.

1346. You would not adopt the Belgian plan?—No, I do not think that would do at all for us.

1347. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Are there any other electoral reforms you would like to see introduced into the present system?—I think I would rather not answer that question. I have been thinking only of proportional representation. There are other electoral reforms.

1348. Have you thought of the question of having all elections on one day, and things of that sort?—Yes, I am in favour of various things such as having elections on one day, and I am strongly in favour of the returning officer's expenses being put on the rates. I should also like to see candidates obliged to put down as a deposit a certain amount of money, to be paid back to them if they obtained, say, one-fifth of the votes, or whatever fraction you like, so as to prevent bogus candidates. But a man who was a genuine *bona-fide* candidate should not have to bear part of the expense of the machinery of the election.

The witness withdrew.

NINTH DAY.

Thursday, 20th May 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.
The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBERTON REEVES.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Mr. WILFRED A. GALES called and examined.

1349. (*Chairman*.) Owing to your position at the Conservative Central Office you have had great experience in electioneering matters?—I have been at it for about 25 years.

1350. Do you consider the present electoral system satisfactory?—I do, to a certain extent, but with regard to the single seat representation, I consider that where there are three or more candidates for one seat there might then be a second ballot, not so far as a second day's polling is concerned, but what is called a second vote allowed to be given on the ballot-paper.

1351. Have you compared our system with the various systems on the Continent, and suggested systems?—I have.

1352. I think it would be the simplest plan if we took them one by one. First of all take the second ballot?—You mean by that a second day's ballot?

1353. Yes, that is the system?—I think it would not be practical from an electioneering point of view. A second day's ballot with a lapse of 48 or 60 hours, or two days' interval before it was taken, would cause an enormous amount of expense, not only to the candidates but also to the machinery of the Returning Officers, and a good deal of the interest that was taken on the first day with regard to voters coming up to vote would not be taken the second time on a second day.

1354. Assuming that those two objections could be got over, do you think it would give a proper representation of the views of the electorate?—I do not know that it would, because I do not think you would get the same proportion of electors to vote upon the second day as you would upon the first.

1355. It is possible that the two parties in the minority may form a combination which would secure the return of one who really was not an effective representative of the majority?—I quite agree.

1356. For these practical reasons you do not favour any scheme of that sort being adopted in this country?—Not in this country for a second ballot to be taken on a second day.

1357. Have you considered the system known as the alternative vote, which is more or less embodied in the two Bills now before Parliament, introduced by Mr. Dundas White and Mr. Robertson?—I think the question of taking a single member constituency, and if there are three candidates for the one seat allowing every voter to have the option of recording a second vote in another margin of the ballot-paper, or marking "1" and "2," as the case may be, is worth something, although I think to a very large extent—perhaps to the extent of 40 per cent.—the electors would not record their second vote. A schedule is drawn up in one Bill which gives a sort of idea as to how it should be worked, but I think the number of people who would not give their second vote would be much larger than they estimate.

1358. That would largely depend on the manner in which the constituency was organised?—Yes, and upon the class of candidates before the constituency.

1359. It might conceivably be to the advantage of a party to recommend their supporters not to fill in their second choice?—It might, certainly.

1360. From the party organisation point of view, do you think that would tend to put more power into the hands of the organisation?—I think it would, taking it on the whole; but not if you take some of the elections

that have taken place. In the Jarrow election, held in 1907, when there were four candidates for the one seat, none of those candidates obtained one-half the votes even if the bottom candidate's second vote had been divided. The third candidate's votes would have had to be divided before the actual majority of the total number of electors could be arrived at, presuming all O'Hanlon's votes had been given to Curran.

1361. In that case the election would still not have represented the majority in favour of the man at the head of the poll after dividing the votes of the last but one?—It would have represented the majority more than the return did. Curran was returned in that case by the votes of about one-third of the whole of those who voted.

1362. Speaking generally, do you consider, in cases like Durham and also in the case the other day in Sheffield, that the alternative vote would enable the constituency to choose its representative more in accordance with its wishes?—I believe, with an alternative vote at Sheffield the other day, there might have been a different result.

1363. It would only operate if considerable numbers expressed a second choice?—That is so, and I do not estimate that a second choice is going to be made by more than 60 per cent. of the total, taking them on the whole right through.

1364. The system of the alternative vote, you think, would apply to single-member constituencies all right?—Yes.

1365. Would it apply to double-member constituencies?—To begin with I am much opposed to the double-member constituencies. In fact, I think some of the towns now that have two members are only entitled to one member, and some who have two are entitled to three. I think that ought to be done away with and single constituencies made. It would be a difficult feature in two-member constituencies, because there would have to be two 1's and two 2's in regard to giving the second vote. A man in a double-barrelled constituency is entitled to two votes, and if he were allowed a second vote he could vote for two. It would be harder in that way to get a real representative feeling of the constituency than in a single-member constituency.

1366. The system suggested by Mr. Robertson in his Bill of dividing the candidates into two lists for double-member constituencies you do not think would work?—I do not think it would work out so well as the schedule seems to point out.

1367. But I take it you disapprove of double-member constituencies in any case?—I do.

1368. The third scheme is the one known as Proportional Representation—the single transferable vote. I see in your memorandum you say you are not in favour of increasing the size of the constituencies?—No.

1369. That is really an answer to the single transferable vote. Unless the size of the constituency is increased the single transferable vote could not work?—Quite so. I mean if you have the proportional representation vote you would have to have a constituency consisting of at least five members, and to have an area of the same proportion as that on which the present House of Parliament is elected and the same number of members, the areas of some of

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those constituencies would be immense. Take Scotland, or the East Riding of Yorkshire and some of the agricultural constituencies, the area which the member would have to represent would be huge.

1370. Would it be necessary to have constituencies of uniform numbers of members?—There would have to be some basis on which representation went, either on population or something. You would have to have redistribution. The more thinly populated, the larger the area the constituency would cover.

1371. Where this system has been tried the constituencies vary considerably in the number of representatives, for instance, in Belgium?—Yes.

1372. You do not think that would be advisable in this country?—I do not think it would at the present time.

1373. You do not see any advantage in taking places like Glasgow or Liverpool or Manchester as one constituency?—I do not, because those places in themselves have their own particular feelings and particular ideas, and towns are so variously divided in their various artisan populations.

1374. You do not think it would encourage the feeling of local patriotism?—No.

1375. So far as regards the broad grounds of the right of minorities to secure representation, under the present system it is almost impossible for them to do so?—That is so.

1376. Do you consider the object to be attained is that one party should be returned with a decisive majority, or that all sections should have a due proportion of representatives?—As the party system now exists, I think to increase the number of parties in the House of Commons would be detrimental to the interests of the country at large.

1377. At present the tendency is for more parties to appear?—It has appeared so these last few years.

1378. Under a scheme of proportional representational would that tendency be increased?—I imagine so.

1379. You do not consider that important sections of the community should have a means of obtaining their own representatives?—I do not see how it is going to be carried out fairly and with justice.

1380. For instance, there are groups within a party which under the present system do not obtain any representation at all practically?—Yes.

1381. Do you consider it would be an advantage that they should do so?—I cannot see it at the present time.

1382. You naturally do not see the advantage of the independent member?—I cannot see that an independent member is going to be very much use to himself unless there be a large group of such members, and then they could not unite on every topic.

1383. As a party organiser, you do not wish, naturally, to see many more of them?—That is so.

1384. You say it would be at least necessary to have five-member constituencies to secure any scheme of proportional representation?—I do, because to get proportional representation, you would have a large number of different sections trying to be elected for that particular area; and to get proportional representation with only three or four member constituencies you could not expect to get the whole of the section represented.

1385. That would greatly depend on the power of the organisation?—Yes, to a certain extent.

1386. Did you have any experience of the old School Board elections, under the cumulative vote system?—Yes, I remember those old elections where a man could give the whole of his seven votes to one candidate.

1387. That was found to put great power into the hands of the organisers?—Yes, and into the hands of minority, too.

1388. That did secure representation for important groups; for instance, Catholics in a Protestant community obtained representation?—Yes. For instance, if a constituency returned 15 members for the School Board, and one section only ran one particular candidate, if the whole of those 15 votes were given to that man by his supporters he might be returned representing a very small number of electors.

1389. You see no difficulty in the actual working of a scheme of transferable votes?—Not in a single-member constituency, where the voter has only one second vote. I see a great difficulty in getting the elector to understand it if seven votes had to be given.

1390. You think that would be a practical difficulty?—It would. I do not think the average elector in the British Isles at the present time would come up to that idea of voting.

1391. Although where it has been tried, it has not proved to be a great difficulty?—Yes, I admit that.

1392. But you think it would be more novel here than in Belgium or other countries?—Yes.

1393. As far as the counting of the votes is concerned, do you see any insuperable objection?—As I mentioned, when the second vote is allowed, the votes recorded for the lowest candidate are divided first, and not the surplus votes taken from the candidate who happens to be at the top of the poll; but I think if you get a strong candidate elected at the top of the poll by a large number of votes, the people who voted for him should not have a second preference rather than those who voted for the lowest down on the list.

1394. It is conceivable that as to the voters for the candidates who came out in the middle of the list their second choice may not come in at all?—Yes.

1395. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Their second choice will be wasted?—Their second choice will be practically wasted.

1396. (*Chairman.*) Taking the General Elections of the few past years, do you consider the results are fair as compared with the number of votes given?—In the last election there were a large number of constituencies won by very small majorities. I did not work that list out, but if you take the 70 seats in the Home Counties, there were 15 of them lost by majorities of under 500.

1397. The tendency therefore is for the majority to have a much larger number of members than it is really entitled to?—Yes, that was proved by figures in the 1886 election. The Unionists got more representation in the House of Commons than their votes entitled them to, but that was only upon the votes recorded. There was no estimate ever formed as to the number of seats uncontested, which were very considerable in 1886, and again in 1900. Those members returned unopposed were counted in the average of the total number of the votes recorded. They ought not to have been calculated in that figure. In working out the statistics, the Unionist party was taken to have so many members returned with a total number of electors, but something like 250 seats were not contested at all.

1398. But comparing one election with another, whatever method you take in dealing with uncontested seats, the result would be the same?—The result would be the same, but the average would be different.

1399. The tendency of the last few elections has always been to exaggerate the majority?—Quite so.

1400. Do you consider that an advantage or disadvantage?—It has its advantages and its disadvantages to a certain extent. It is very difficult to exactly describe it.

1401. Taking particular areas, such as Wales, for instance, it will be seen that the Conservative party in Wales secures in this Parliament no representation, and usually none, although their actual numbers entitle them to a certain proportion. It is the same in Ireland; in fact in many localities one party gets no representation at all. Do not you consider that that sort of thing should be remedied if possible?—It is difficult to say in which way it could be remedied. It could only be remedied, as it was suggested here, by the formation of very large constituencies. Now Wales has 30 members, and to do that it would divide it into about four constituencies of seven members each. I do not think the effect of that would make very much difference.

1402. The chance of the minority securing representation would be increased?—The chance would be increased.

1403. And also in the South of Ireland the chance of the Unionists obtaining a seat would be increased?—I will not go so far as that.

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1404. Is the disproportion really too great there?—Yes, I think so.

1405. I see in your memorandum you say you are in favour of a scheme of redistribution?—I am, certainly.

1406. That is on account of the anomalies which now exist?—Yes; a division like Romford has now over 50,000 electors, and a small place like Durham City, or Canterbury, has only about 3,000.

1407. But it should be redistribution to take the form of single-member constituencies?—Yes. I have made a note also that the redistribution if made before another census came in, should not be on the old census of 1901, which has no bearing on the present population of many of those constituencies that now exist. The Return that has been issued by the House of Commons—Sir Charles Dilke's Return—shows the proportion of the population in a good many of the constituencies is absolutely absurd.

1408. The population is much less, do you mean?—The number of electors is much in excess of the proportion of population; in all these places round about London—Romford, Walthamstow, Wandsworth, and Wimbledon—the population in 1901, as compared with the number of electors in 1909, is out of all proportion. They have increased so much during the last eight years. To form a redistribution on a census practically nine years old would not be a just representation of the thing at all. That is the reason I say that the only basis now of the population is that of the electorate.

1409. Surely the electors and population at any given moment bear the same ratio?—They did when the redistribution came in in 1884-5, but they certainly do not at the present time in the returns published.

1410. If you take the redistribution on the basis of the electors, when the census comes round it will be found more or less to be right according to the population as well?—It would be in 1911.

1411. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) You mean you have existing statistics as to the electors, but not as to population?—Yes—statistics furnished by the House of Commons.

1412. That would be your reason for preferring to take the electors as a basis?—Providing there is no census taken between now and the redistribution.

1413. (Chairman.) The electors are automatically calculated every year?—Yes.

1414. You have furnished us with a list of elections of more than two candidates for one seat, and more than four candidates for two seats. That is in 1906?—Yes. "A" means that they occurred at the General Election, and "B" at by-elections. Then there is a summary of it at the end.

1415. That is really replying to the question of whether the second ballot would be necessary?—Quite so.

1416. Of course at by-elections the tendency is to have more candidates than at a general election?—Yes, that has proved to be so.

1417. The list following that is a list of the actual figures of all the three-cornered contests?—Yes. "A" means those that took place at the General Election, and "B" means those that have taken place at by-elections since the General Election.

1418. I may take it you are altogether opposed to large constituencies with the transferable vote, and that the second ballot, you think, would not be applicable?—I am opposed to increasing the size of constituencies, and a second ballot being held on a second or third day. I think the question might be very well considered where there are more than two candidates for one seat, of the voter having the option of recording his vote for a second candidate, that is to say, provided his candidate should be at the bottom of the list, his second vote should be counted.

1419. That is the alternative vote system?—Yes.

1420. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) As embodied in Mr. Robertson's Bill, roughly?—Roughly.

1421. As applied to single-member constituencies?—Yes.

1422. (Chairman.) You desire the abolition of double-member constituencies altogether?—Yes.

1423. You would not suggest a departure being made even with the large towns?—I should not.

1424. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) The main objections that were urged by a witness yesterday—Mr. Parker-Smith—to the single-member system were three?—I saw the report in the *Times*.

1425. The three objections were the excessive swing of the pendulum, the excessive power of the balancing elector, and the excessive rigidity of party discipline. What weight would you attach to those three objections?—I think you are bound to have the swing of the pendulum in any case. The whole system of party organisation cannot beat against that, because, as a matter of course it is true, as he stated, that the whole of the constituencies throughout the country might return one particular party by a bare majority; but I think that is still preferable to having the whole country put into various districts of four, five, six or more members.

1426. As to the balancing elector, he thought it gave excessive power to the balancing elector, by which, I think, he meant the disproportionate power of a small widely spread fanatical section. I imagine he was thinking of such cases as the Post Office voter?—I do not think they would be strong enough in any particular constituency in which they are registered to have sufficient supporters to carry any candidate they might run. I dare say, if you made London into eight or ten constituencies, perhaps a Post Office representative round the district of St. Martin's-le-Grand might have sufficient supporters to be returned, but not anywhere else. The same with the police vote; they are too widely spread throughout the Metropolis and the large towns to be of any vital importance in any particular area.

1427. Two objections which are not quite consistent with each other were urged against the existing system; first, that it gives disproportionate representation to the majority. That you will admit, I suppose?—Yes, I admit that.

1428. Should you attach much practical importance to it as an objection?—No. By getting one member representation on the full majority of the electors you get from that particular area for which that member is elected the majority of electors, and it would be difficult in any way with single representation to allow any other course to be taken up.

1429. Then the other objection was that under the existing system there was a possibility of a minority of electors returning a majority of representatives. That you touched upon in connection with the 1886 Elections?—Yes.

1430. Should you say it was an improbable contingency?—When I made my remarks on what Mr. Parker-Smith said yesterday, that the average he was there quoting was not the average of the contested seats, but the average of the total number of Unionists returned including those which had no contest in their divisions, I meant to say if there had been contests in those particular divisions the number of Unionist votes in Unionist seats would have been materially increased; the same with regard to Liberal votes in Liberal seats.

1431. Would it be your view that on any occasion a minority of electors has returned a majority of representatives?—No, not a minority.

1432. Would you consider it a contingency not sufficiently probable to be considered?—I do not think it could be considered.

1433. Should you, or should you not, be in favour of having a single day for all elections?—The great objection you would have to that would not be from party organisations but Returning Officers themselves, especially in big areas, with regard to police keeping order and that sort of thing. The objection would come more from them than from party organisations throughout the country. There is such an enormous amount of machinery to be brought into work—Returning Officers, polling clerks, police, and that sort of thing—that the difficulty would be for sheriffs of counties where there are eight or nine divisions, or more, to get the whole machinery to work in one day. That is the greatest difficulty.

1434. It would be urged that the Returning Officer could not provide a sufficient staff?—To a very large

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extent that would be the greatest difficulty, I think, in working out the machinery of carrying on the election rather than taking into consideration party organisation.

1435. Do you attach much weight to that objection yourself, or do you know enough about it to give an opinion?—I do not know enough about it. I admit it does not occur in London so much as in the counties, because the staff of men is much greater which can be called upon in a large town than in country districts, where there are something like 40 or 50 polling districts to be supplied with machinery, Presiding Officers, and that sort of thing. The difficulty would occur there more than in towns.

1436. The objection might be stated from another point of view, that it would diminish the number of fairly lucrative posts to be obtained at a General Election?—It would spread it out more.

1437. I mean one man could not act in more than one constituency?—Yes, I mean it would spread it out amongst those employed.

1438. Have you any other improvements or alterations in the methods of elections to suggest as to hours of polling and so on?—No, I think they are very fair.

1439. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You were suggesting that if we had a system of alternative votes in single-member constituencies, where there were three candidates, you were afraid that a large number of electors—I think you said 40 per cent.—would not exercise their second preference at all?—That is my opinion.

1440. What would you say to a system whereby if there was no second preference marked upon the paper the vote could not count—that a voter would have to say which candidate he preferred, and also which candidate he would like his second vote transferred to, and if he did not mark his preference his vote should be a spoiled vote?—You are presuming that there are three names on the ballot-paper, and at *this* corner the voter would have to put 1, or a X, whichever the instructions are, and if there was no 1 and only a 2, I should consider that was a spoiled paper.

1441. That is not quite my point. You were afraid the second preference would not be exercised, and the man would not give any indications as to the way in which he would prefer his vote transferred in the case of a transferable vote being necessary?—That is my idea. I contend that quite 40 per cent. of electors will vote for one man and one man only. Presuming there are three candidates up—a Unionist, a Liberal and a Labour man—they will go absolutely for what I call their ticket first, and will not take the trouble to vote for a second.

1442. What would you say to a suggestion to overcome that difficulty by compelling a man to exercise his preference, and to refuse to count his vote if he did not do so, and consider it a spoiled paper?—I think the elector would take a rather arbitrary view of it if he was compelled to do so, and say, "I may vote for my first man, and then I must vote for another man I do not approve of."

1443. Then I think you said that all constituencies should be of the same size, and that the suggestion the Chairman made to you that in other countries different constituencies return a different number of members would not be applicable to this country. In your scheme of redistribution with single members, would you have all the constituencies of the same size?—It would be absolutely impossible to get them all the same size, but I should make them as near as possible, striking an average upon the number of electors, or, if a census was taken, on the number of the population, as in 1884 and in 1885, when they could not make absolutely everyone alike where boundaries had to be taken into consideration, and other items. When the Act came into force in 1885, the county constituencies were, on an average, a very fair kind of proportional representation at that time, but at the present time they have grown out of all knowledge.

1444. You would have no differentiation between rural and urban constituencies?—The rural constituencies naturally, to get their population or electors, would be much larger in area. It could be worked in that way.

1445. And they would therefore have, as a consequence, fewer representatives?—Yes.

1446. But that would not be an objection?—No, I do not think so.

1447. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You would have a universal system of single-member districts on the basis of an approximately equal number of electors to each district?—As far as possible.

1448. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) In your experience and discussion of electioneering matters amongst voters, have you ever heard the question of proportional representation much discussed?—No.

1449. Would you say there was any portion of the population interested in it?—No, I do not think there is, because I think the smaller the constituency the more keenness there is in regard to the candidate, and the more local influence is brought to bear.

1450. Do you think there would be a considerable amount of opposition to overcome in its adoption?—I should say so. That is my own opinion. If you made large areas covering large districts, it would be impossible for candidates to make themselves known over certain districts in that case.

1451. That is, I understand, the chief objection you have to large constituencies, that it would loosen the connection between a member personally and those who voted for him?—Precisely, it would loosen the personal connection.

1452. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) One or two questions, not with regard to your evidence as a whole, but as to the position in which you come before us. You are a representative of what?—I represent the Conservative Central Office, St. Stephen's Chambers.

1453. Is that an association to which the county Conservative Associations are affiliated?—Yes. It is the guiding office for the party throughout the country.

1454. You are speaking for the central office, and through them for the allied offices?—It is rather the other way about, the allied offices come to us for consultation. We have not discussed this question with the allied offices at all as to representation throughout the country.

1455. But we may take it that the evidence you have given so very clearly and very well, represents the opinion of the allied offices?—I think you may take it so.

1456. Would you also say that the opinions you have expressed were those of leading members of the Unionist party?—No, I should not like to go so far as that.

1457. Your opinion is really the opinion of the office?—Yes, of the office.

1458. I do not use the term offensively, but of the machine?—Of the machine.

1459. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You stated that you were not aware that very much interest had been shown in the constituencies in the question of proportional representation, and that you had not heard it discussed very much. Is there any sort of electoral reform which has lately excited any special interest?—The question of proportional representation, I said, has never been discussed, and I do not think it has, but I think the question of redistribution and also of the franchise is very keen and very acute in some constituencies.

1460. In regard to the minor matters, as to the polling-day, you stated you thought there was no need for extension of polling hours?—I said so.

1461. Have you never heard then of any case of any considerable number of electors being shut out in the last hours?—Not of recent years. I think there was a case in one of the Tower Hamlets Divisions when the idea was that if they got to the polling booth by 8 o'clock, and they got inside, they could vote. Now the electors know that they have to have voting papers issued to them before 8 o'clock, one hears of few cases of people being left out. In 1885 and 1886 it occurred frequently.

1462. Was not there a notorious case at Walthamstow when a large number of people were shut out?—I said the Tower Hamlets, but I believe it was Walthamstow. That is the one I am referring to, but that was some years ago.

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1463. It is necessary that an elector should not only vote in his district personally, but at a particular polling place?—That is what they have to do now.

1464. Do you consider that is always absolutely necessary?—I do not see in what other way you could prevent personation if you allowed him to vote anywhere.

1465. You are aware that in a good many countries they do allow them to vote anywhere in their district?—Yes.

1466. In the country I know best there is no complaint about personation resulting?—I presume you are referring to a voter who is on the Register, and has removed during the year to another residence away. I think before that should be allowed to be done every precaution should be taken that the voter should be struck off the list upon which his name originally appeared, and some machinery by which the presiding officer can enter him on the list where he resides. I see no hardship in that, but to allow the name to remain on in both places might lead to any amount of personation.

1467. Is it not the case that a considerable number of people are debarred from voting because of moving from one part of a constituency to another?—The

number of removals in an election, especially as the year gets on, increase considerably. A number of absentee voters are caused by what you mention.

1468. If the fact that a man lived in a constituency and was still living in a constituency were sufficient to establish his claim to vote, although he had shifted his residence, it would certainly increase the number of votes polled?—Presuming that a man is already on the Register for one division and he goes into another division, which might be in another county.

1469. No, I am speaking of removals from one part of the same constituency to another?—In the same division I do not think it would make very much difference. Removals are to a very large extent traced in the division or borough in which the voters reside, and they do vote. The difficulty is with those who have gone away into other constituencies further afield.

1470. But there are complaints that men who have merely moved from one part of the same constituency to another, or a great many of them, lose votes on that account?—There might be at a general election, but at a by-election I do not think it occurs so much.

1471. Still, a general election is the important thing?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Right Hon. Sir CHARLES W. DILKE, Bart., called in and examined.

1472. (Chairman.) You are a Member of Parliament and have gone through a good many contested elections, and have taken part in the discussions regarding the last Redistribution Bill?—Yes, I prepared the last Redistribution Bill.

1473. It was, I understand, more or less of a compromise between the two Parties of the State?—Yes, that is of course known, and most of the details have now come out in Mr. Winston Churchill's "Life of Lord Randolph Churchill" and Mr. Morley's "Life of Gladstone," and in a great many other places, and also to some extent in Parliament at the time.

1474. With reference to the Draft Reform Bill, the one which did not actually come into the light of day, you prefer not to make any statement, as it has not become public property?—I can state what is known in different places, and I can give the dates. The dates are material, because it might be implied from the evidence of Lord Courtney, which I have been allowed to see, that little or no consideration had been given to the matter before the date of his Memorandum. Lord Courtney's Memorandum is dated the 8th of November 1884. There is a little ambiguity, because he says that it was written before redistribution was, as far as he knew, considered by any Member of the Cabinet. That may mean that it was written at an earlier date. It might be thought to imply that no consideration so far as he knew was given to proportional representation before the 8th of November 1884. That would be altogether wrong. As early as July very full consideration was given to it. Long before the 8th November I think it must be said it had been finally in every form rejected by everybody.

1475. In considering this question, did any other methods of representation come before you?—In 1870, at the time of the Education Bill, there being in the Bill no popularly elected School Board, a series of amendments were prepared jointly, largely on the advice of Professor Fawcett, in the House, and Mr. Mill and Mr. Hare, outside the House. The amendment creating a School Board in London was put down by Mr. M'Cullagh Torrens, and that was accepted in advance by the Government. But the Government did not hold out any prospect of accepting universal school boards popularly elected throughout the country, and the amendments to create those school boards were put down in the names of myself and Lord Frederick Cavendish jointly. They were put down together and considered together all through. On that occasion the mode adopted of course was that of the cumulative vote on a long list which is quite different from the minority vote in the three-cornered constituencies. Those were the two forms that were in existence in 1884, and

those I think were the two forms which were mainly in people's minds. Others, of course, had been suggested by Mr. Hare and others; but Professor Fawcett, Mr. Hare and Mr. Mill were all parties, I think, to the selection of the cumulative vote in our Amendments of 1870. The fight came on my Amendment for the popular election, and the Government had a very small majority on the first Division, and yielded after that. It was a cross Division, and most of those who voted with me were favourable to the second Amendment of Lord Frederick Cavendish, which was a part of our success, because when the Government yielded they yielded to both. The representation of women and Roman Catholics was very specially in view as regarded the educational authorities. That I think answers your question as to other plans being considered between July and September 1884. Those two plans were mainly in people's minds.

1476. That is as far as the actual redistribution went?—Those two plans were before me and Sir John Lambert, who was working with me.

1477. They were both rejected in favour of single-member constituencies?—The decision was never taken in favour of absolute single-member constituencies until a much later date. I can find you the exact dates if you wish to know.

1478. I think it would be interesting if you could find those dates?—Perhaps I ought to say that there had been a struggle between 1870 and 1884 for the retention of the cumulative vote, and to some extent for the retention of the minority vote.

1479. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) In three-member constituencies?—Yes; the matter had been frequently before Parliament, and there was a division of opinion on the School Boards on the matter which led to a long correspondence in the *Times* on more than one occasion. The Education League, with Mr. Chamberlain, Chairman of the Committee, at its head, was at variance with the London branch of which I was President, we supporting the cumulative vote put in in 1870, and the headquarters of the organisation as a whole—but for some branches opposing them—trying to procure its repeal. The matter was mentioned in Parliament in the debates on Lord Sandon's Bill. It was one of the amendments which the Education League wished to make in that Bill.

1480. You supporting and Mr. Chamberlain opposing the vote?—Yes, I was supporting until the last Education Bill when School Boards disappeared. As to the dates in 1884, I propose to confine myself to what has become public through the memoirs—principally the two I mentioned, but many others—and things which concerned myself and were known at the time to many

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outside the Cabinet. Our work began in July 1884, and on the 14th July 1884 I reported the results of the work of myself and Sir John Lambert to Mr. Gladstone, and this matter was discussed, especially with regard to the extension or retention of three-member seats with a minority vote. I think I may say that it would appear later that there was an almost universal consensus of opinion against that particular form of minority representation, and that no other form had powerful friends on either side of politics.

1481. (*Chairman.*) Was the system known as the transferable vote advocated?—It was hardly known to politicians. It was known, of course, in literature.

1482. Of course; as Mr. Hare's scheme?—Yes, I had frequently discussed the matter myself with Mr. Hare and Mr. Mill, as well as with Professor Fawcett and Lord Courtney.

1483. But it did not come really before you as a practical matter?—No, I think the practical matter was the abolition or retention or extension of the three-cornered plan, but of course words were used frequently with regard to minority representation in general. A Committee was appointed to help me and Sir John Lambert on the 9th August, and amongst my colleagues, on that Committee Lord Hartington and Lord Kimberley at first had some leanings towards proportional or minority representation; but I think they seemed to have no reason to believe that it was likely of acceptance by a majority in the House of Commons or by the leaders of the majority in the House of Lords. On the 15th September Lord Kimberley made up his mind against the existing minority clause, and expressed his opinion in favour of "equal electoral districts," to use his phrase—meaning single-member districts, I think, but he did not say so—which had been suggested by some of his colleagues in public speeches in the country at that time. Late in September Mr. Gladstone expressed a view which was opposed to universal single-member districts, although favourable to them as a general principle, I think. He was favourable, however, to use his own words, to "some two's and to some single's." In October there were influential representations made by leading individuals in Ireland, some of them connected with the Irish Government, in favour of proposals for the representation of minorities in Ireland—a point which I think is mentioned in Lord Eversley's Memorandum. On the 27th October the first parliamentary question, so far as I can find, was asked in connection with minority representation in the Redistribution Bill by Sir John Lubbock, but the answer threw no light on the matter. On the 29th October (it is possible that Sir Courtenay Ilbert may have papers of Sir Erskine May upon this subject, or could find them) certain memoranda were sent to me through Sir Erskine May, who also saw me several times with regard to them. That, I think, represented conversations—and this matter was afterwards mentioned in Parliament in March 1885—at that time between Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir Erskine May.

1484. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) I have not seen any notes of it?—The question put to me by Sir Erskine May was whether there was any prospect of any suggestion of minority representation, either generally or in any part of the United Kingdom, no doubt pointing to the Irish proposals. I have only this Note of my reply, which perhaps is material: "It seems to have no friends;" that is what I wrote. On the 31st October there were articles at once in several Conservative newspapers stating that the Conservative leaders favoured a larger and much more thorough-going scheme of redistribution than was supposed to be before those who were considering it for the Government. There were in some of those articles hints of a plan for universal single-member districts in counties from which all the urban areas should be carefully picked out, and the urban areas grouped in districts returning three members with a minority clause. There were articles in the October *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* in which there were suggestions on that subject, not so strong as might be gathered from the debates on the matter, which took place in March 1885, in which both these articles were frequently referred to. I have looked over the articles, and there is not much

in them that seems to support the allusions to the articles in the Debates. I do not know whether I may say that Lord Salisbury appears to have expressed at that time an opinion which he afterwards placed in brief terms (which I shall name) before us, that the Liberal party were not likely to jump at the representation of the Tory minority in towns coupled with the extinction of the Liberal minority in the Counties. That was the view taken of that proposal at the time. It was of course asserted—and this is mentioned in the Memorandum of Lord Courtney, and in the Memorandum of Lord Eversley, and in the Debates of March 1885—and believed that considerable variety of representation would be secured by the single-member system. All the speakers who had leanings towards minority representation, but who had decided to go against it, at one time or another made that statement. Of course all this was before the date of the 8th of November. The most serious proposals were undoubtedly those which concerned Ireland, but I confess I took all along the view that no one could seriously propose to the House of Commons to have a minority system of representation in Ireland, and to have none, and even to extinguish the vestige of one, which existed in the rest of the United Kingdom.

1485. (*Chairman.*) The fact remains that it was then considered possible to have a scheme of minority representation?—I think I must say that it was not seriously considered, because I do not think anyone pressed the view that Ireland could be separately treated in that respect after some consideration had been given to the matter. There is a reference at that date in Mr. Churchill's "Life of Lord Randolph Churchill," which is probably based on memoranda and letters of Lord Randolph Churchill, who at that time had a scheme of his own which he discussed repeatedly with Lord James of Hereford; but I only heard verbal expressions with regard to that scheme, and I do not remember its nature. In the "Life of Lord Randolph Churchill" it is shown that he took keen interest in the subject of redistribution at that moment, and in its details, and alluding to the Redistribution Bill before its introduction, there are these words which may be Mr. Churchill's *resumé* of his father's memoranda: "The momentum which this measure acquired"—that is the Redistribution Bill—"was great enough to carry it through all sections of the Liberal party, and over all opposition, and to throw on one side or the other devices as intricate and attractive as proportional representation." That completes the dates before the date of the 8th November mentioned by Lord Courtney. Then came what you may call the agreement.

1486. The main matter in the agreement was the determination to have single-member constituencies?—On the 18th November Lord Salisbury wrote to me that he hoped that an agreement might be come to for an extension of the single-member principle to all county divisions, and the whole Metropolis, the latter receiving its full quota—that is of members—as well as to all the suburbs of large towns. That, of course, leaves out a good deal, as you will see. It leaves out the cities. On the 21st November Lord Salisbury suggested to me, in a tentative way, I think, passing on a suggestion which he had received—the minority clause in Ireland; refused by me at once, "If Ireland only"—to use my words—without asking anybody else, and on the same day. On the 22nd November—that is the next day—was the first meeting which followed some very informal ones mentioned in the Memoirs. That first meeting was in Downing Street between Lord Salisbury, Sir Stafford Northcote, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Hartington, and myself. Several statements made at that meeting have been made public on the authority of Mr. Gladstone and others. On the 25th November I received the first formal memorandum stating Lord Salisbury's views. In this the only allusion which bears on the matter is to certain existing three-member cities. He states that an agreement between himself and Sir Stafford Northcote on that point had not yet been reached, Sir Stafford Northcote "preferring division into ones," and Lord Salisbury, at that moment, preferring division into "a two and a one," both abandoning the existing minority

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clause. On the 26th November there came the second and last formal Downing Street meeting, at which there were present two on each side, and Lord Salisbury threw out as a possibility, to use his words, the retention of the minority clause in some of the then existing three-cornered constituencies, but not in all—to use his words—Birmingham and Glasgow being expressly excluded by him on the ground of the local unpopularity of the arrangement in those two cities.

1487. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Can you tell us what attraction the two-member constituencies had?—They had a great attraction for Mr. Gladstone. I do not know what they had for Lord Salisbury. Mr. Gladstone was a great Conservative on redistribution—the strongest I ever met—on every point connected with redistribution.

1488. Because they did not provide for minority representation in any sense?—At Glasgow they succeeded in defeating the minority clause and, by a most rigid party ticket and an extraordinary close arrangement, always succeeded in getting their own way. In Birmingham, if I remember rightly, they did not always succeed.

1489. (*Sir Courtenay Ibert.*) I suppose Mr. Gladstone would probably have been influenced most by the feeling that the two-member system was the normal system in old times?—He denied that in the House of Commons in the Debate, but, of course, it did influence his mind no doubt. In the House of Commons, in Debate, he argued that the single-member constituencies were created by the Reform Bill of 1832, and had worked well, and the system should be extended; but he clung very strongly indeed to the two-member system in all the towns where it existed, and, I think, that both he and Lord Salisbury had a conservative leaning towards what they called a two-member nucleus in places which were to receive more members. I confess I never understood it.

1490. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Do you hold to the single-member system?—I think, perhaps, I had better reserve that point to the end, because I rather want to set aside my individual opinions. I do not come here as a very willing witness to-day, and I will say why at the end. Perhaps that will be the best way. At that time I acted ministerially. I was trying to bring about an arrangement between the two parties, and trying to smooth the way for a Redistribution Bill. I was trying to draw up a Redistribution Bill on which an agreement could take place. That was my business and my desire. The so-called compact, to use the word used all through all the debates—was drawn up on the 28th November between Lord Salisbury and myself at Arlington Street. By that time Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote had agreed on single members in boroughs as a rule, with some exceptions. It is not specified in the first draft to what exceptions the allusion was. But, of course, Mr. Gladstone's exception was the retention of the existing two-member seats as two-member seats. I am not quite certain what was Lord Salisbury's exception at that moment. I think he used words which covered that and might have covered something else. In the formal form of the compact itself, dated 28th November, the matter is quite definite as regards other exceptions. No. 1, is: The Irish representation to be let alone in number, if the House were to be increased by 12 members to 670—a matter which was afterwards debated as an open question, and not decided by the compact—and to be reduced to 100 members if the House remained at 658, that being left to the decision of the House; but No. 2 is in these words: "Minorities not to be directly represented." That is covered by a paragraph put in afterwards by Lord Salisbury, who inserted at the bottom in Mr. Gladstone's copy of the draft which came back to Lord Salisbury: "The above will be considered by the Government as vital"—that covers No. 2—"and the Government will resist as a vital question the insertion in the Bill of any provision inconsistent with the above." On the 11th and 12th March 1885—I am jumping now because nothing occurred which bears on it before that—Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote

had come to the distinct view that they wished to have single-member constituencies everywhere, that is to say, against Mr. Gladstone's reservation; but Mr. Gladstone refused to vary the agreement on that point. That matter was debated on the 17th March in the House of Commons. There were some allusions to it in the Debate opened by Lord Courtney on the 4th December, not to that agreement, of course, which was later, but to the subject which was covered by it. Mr. Gladstone on that occasion stated the opinion with regard to the single-member seats having been successful and that view with regard to their introducing variety in the representation to which allusion has already been made by me. On that occasion Mr. Northcote, the present Lord Northcote, made a personal explanation which bears on this matter as it refers I think, to the Sir Erskine May communication, to which I have made allusion. The debate was also notable because Lord Goschen—who had a considerable leaning towards the representation of minorities, and who held a Conservative view upon this question in the Liberal party and who was not a supporter of the Franchise Bill in the form it had assumed—then spoke for a mixed plan, partly single-member, but he did not support Lord Courtney. On the 2nd March, an instruction was moved by Sir John Lubbock on going into Committee. The view taken by the Government was that to which I alluded just now as being that of Mr. Gladstone, that single-member districts gave variety of representation. Personally I stated then—and this is getting on to the question asked by Mr. Reeves—that I had always supported myself the cumulative vote as applied to School Board Elections, and that I had some sympathy with the views represented by Sir John Lubbock. Mr. Balfour, who was in close personal connection with Lord Salisbury at the time, explained why he could not support Sir John Lubbock. He said that if anybody ought to wish for the representation of the views of minorities he, Mr. Balfour, ought to, as he expected to be generally in a minority through his life, and he also believed that single-member constituencies would over-represent majorities, but the single-member system he thought much more perfect than any other yet devised of the proposed systems which he examined, I think I should put in the word "unfortunately," because the tone of his speech was one of regret that it should be so. These are his actual words: "Alien to their habits and modes of thought" and he added: "it was not so much the case that the question was dead as that it had never been alive. It had received the support of some 200 or 300 people, of whom he was proud to be one, and a few theoretical politicians, but it was perfectly clear that it was absolutely impossible to get the mass of the community to accept it." In the Division there were 31, besides tellers, alone who voted with Sir John Lubbock, and none of the leading independent Conservatives, or none of those who have held high office since, were in the 31 except Mr. St. John Brodrick, who was a young Member of the House at that time.

1491. (*Chairman.*) In your opinion the single-member constituencies have since that Redistribution Act carried out the purpose?—No, I am not here to say that. My position is a very different one. It is, and I think always has been, that of one who would in the abstract desire to attain many of the objects suggested by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Lord Courtney, and others, but who regrets, that it is, has been, and is likely to be, as long as I am alive at all events, held by the leaders of the parties, especially the two principal parties in the State out of the four parties in the House of Commons and two parties in the House of Lords, to be inconsistent with the party system. I am not a supporter of the party system, and never have been *in vacuo*, but it is no good dealing with abstract speculation.

1492. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) With regard to the opinion of the mass of the people or the public, do you think they have any opinion at all about it?—I think it is perhaps rather more in the minds now of what you may call the public than it has been previously. I say that with some little doubt, because there was a moment when Mr. Hare's book was new,

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when it was first very actively advocated in the Universities—for instance, Oxford and Cambridge—and by young University men all over the country, when it had a considerable vogue, as it has a considerable vogue now. Between the two times there was a long period in which it was little thought of, so that I speak with some hesitation. But there is no doubt that there are a good many people who now, as in that earlier time, have it in their minds, and desire to attain the object which has been so well described here. After all, the decision in these matters, until you have a very much more widespread opinion upon it, is in the hands of the leaders of two great parties in the State, and if they think it inconsistent with the party system, that is an obstacle to any possibility of success.

1493. (*Chairman.*) You do not think it is now approaching more practical form in that it has been adopted in other countries, and is now likely to be adopted in South Africa?—It seems to be vanishing in South Africa, but I am quite aware of the experiments which some countries, happily, I think, are trying. But it is possible in the abstract to demonstrate that the party system and the parliamentary system, as we know it, are not the best system of government either for this country or for the Empire. It is quite possible, I think, to demonstrate that abstractly to the point of conviction of perhaps a majority of distinguished men; but that is not enough. You have other great rival systems of government. You have the imperfections of the American system, with some merits, but you have the fact, as I think it—it seems a paradox—that there are many points in the Swiss system of government which are more applicable to a great Empire than they are to a small country. But I do not think it is any use to write books to announce doctrines of that sort in face of the fact that we are here governed on a party and a parliamentary system which we are not likely to change.

1494. You think the party system is absolutely incompatible with any scheme of proportional representation?—It is not my business to say so. All I say is the leaders of the great parties always have thought so and, I fear, do think so.

1495. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Do you suspect that in that matter the leaders may be guided by the machines?—No, I do not think so. I think they have a strong opinion of their own, quite independent of any machine. That is what I met with, and I have not seen much change in that respect, I think. I should say that many of the very youngest men in the present Cabinet entertain that opinion quite as strongly, and the Unionist Front Bench entertain that view quite as strongly, as any of the leading men that I have named.

1496. (*Chairman.*) Would hostility be directed against a tentative proposal, for instance, supposing it was confined to large boroughs?—You will probably immediately have party feeling as between the two parties come into that. They would say any local experiment would be attended with the Birmingham and Glasgow difficulties of the old experiment. Each party would think or say that it was directed to some particular party end at the next election which was to follow: I am afraid that would be so. Of course, with regard to the larger considerations about minorities which have been so well stated to you, to judge by the newspapers, by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, there was the instance of the rapid extinction in 1899 of the very general opinion among Unionists against a possible South African War from the point of view of British interests. That was a very widespread and very strongly entertained opinion in the House of Commons before the War began, but that opinion was rapidly extinguished, and that minority was hardly represented except by Lord Courtney and Sir Edward Clarke. Then again there is the present case which Lord Balfour of Burleigh alluded to of the Free Trade Unionists at this moment. I am afraid that the party leader now, as in former times, takes the view that any resistance to that tendency or that effect of single-member constituencies or of majority representation is a device to preserve in a glass case or under a glass shade a specimen on which he desires to trample with a boot. That, I think, is the party leader's usual view.

1497. Take the larger areas where the minority gets no representation at all. Take, for instance, Wales?—That was the Irish case as put to me by many leading men in Ireland of both of the old parties in 1884; but, of course, I answered then you could not treat Ireland exceptionally, and to do that you must do it everywhere, and therefore we raise the larger question of doing it everywhere—a system of general application. The most hopeful experiments perhaps might be those which would concern other forms of government than that with which you are dealing here—not the Legislative Chamber in the first instance, but other bodies.

1498. Such as the County Councils?—County Councils to which increasing powers are being continually given and representation on which is, of course, subject to admitted great difficulties which are present to us all. That might be the best chance of educating the public mind to the idea, but of course one speaks with some doubt because of the extinction—with much resistance as regards the *ad hoc* authority but with little resistance on the particular point that concerns us here—of School Boards by Mr. Balfour's last Education Act. Of course the difficulty so apparent as regards women, for instance, was met by the power of co-opting members.

1499. But where the party system does not enter very vigorously you think proportional representation might obtain?—Yes, I do. I think it ought to grow in all those quarters because after all the parties do not resist it in those cases. The party leaders do not trouble themselves with them.

1500. Supposing this scheme of Lord Courtney conflicted too strongly with the party system ever to be adopted, are there any modifications of it which you would suggest,—for instance, the alternative vote in three-cornered contests?—No, I have come here to-day rather unwillingly and with no possibility of saying I would not come because I think you had every right to tell me to come, but, holding a rather pessimistic opinion perhaps, I have not come with a view of developing my own abstract ideas, which are less entitled to consideration for the reasons I have given, and I have given less attention in detail to the matter in recent years than others you have already called.

1501. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) The question was not as to the representation of minorities, but as to the representation of the majority?—Let us call it full representation—representation of all opinions that should be represented. In that view I entirely concur personally.

1502. That is a different thing. That might be a justification for the application of the alternative vote in order to secure the representation of the full majority?—Yes, but I am afraid I hold that pessimistic opinion I expressed just now with regard to the fate of the specimens. Let us take it from a wider than a merely party opinion. A great party leader would answer, on my example of the South African War, that he thought war had to come then, and it was better for the country that the minority should be under-represented, which it undoubtedly was.

1503. Would the leader of the Liberal Party continue to revel in the prospect of a split vote between his followers and the Labour Party in the North-Country constituencies?—There, when you consider the existence of the two other parties in the House of Commons—the Labour Party and the Irish Party—you come into considerations which I should not mind talking about in private, but which I think are not matters for one to speak of publicly, because one is immediately led into considering, for instance, the very existence of four parties, in a two-party system in which personally I do not believe. So it is rather a false position.

1504. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) For that reason you prefer not to consider the Belgian procedure?—I should prefer not to discuss here somewhat crudely and with a great deal of reserve things which I should not at all mind discussing in private.

1505. You admit and accept the theoretical argument in favour of proportional representation?—Absolutely.

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1506. But you do not consider the question one of practical politics?—No, because in this country we are wedded, rightly or wrongly, to a system which I, personally, am perhaps in a minority of one in not believing in.

1507. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) May I ask one minor practical question with regard to the machinery of elections. As to the polling days, the polling hours, the regulations as to an elector having to vote at a particular booth, the difficulties about registration, and so forth, do you think on the whole there is any considerable improvement which might be effected or not?—I hold a very strong view on that—which would be carrying us outside your functions probably—that almost all those difficulties are caused by the application of our franchises. It is only by the single and simple franchise that you could possibly avoid those complications.

1508. But do you think that the hours of polling might be extended?—There are many reasons always given in the House of Commons against extension—fears of riot, dark hours, and time of year. Unless it were an extension which varied by a sort of Day Light Saving Bill provision with the time of year, there are great practical objections which are outside the scope of this Commission. But, of course, even the system of the polling is affected by the considerations which I named just now; because there are an immense number of lists that have to be consulted—the ownership list, the occupation list, the lodger list, the service franchise list, the list of voters who are from other districts, freehold voters to poll in that district. All those lists have to be consulted, and if the slightest hitch occurs, it takes an infinitely longer time than if we had a simple single franchise, and I may say that the complications and loss of time introduced even in a first election by the adoption of an unusual scheme would, in my opinion, not be so considerable as those which exist with us now, on account of the complexity of our lists.

1509. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Have you any objection to saying what your views are with regard to the second ballot, which does come within the scope of our Inquiry?—I used to favour it. I drew up a Bill for it, and my brother brought in a Bill for it drawn by me in the Session of 1880, I think. I am favourable to it. Before the existence of the Labour Party as a separate organisation, I was very strongly favourable to it; but, of course, now you cannot avoid considering it in relation to the three-party matter in English constituencies which was mentioned in the question put by Sir Francis Hopwood just now, and I would sooner not deal with it.

1510. You would sooner not consider the comparative advantages and disadvantages of second ballot and transferable vote. I mean as applied to single-member constituencies?—But that is an education for the other, and is to some extent connected in people's minds with a desire to educate them into the other, and therefore I think it is governed by the general considerations put as to the non-probability of the adoption of any system which was advocated for that reason. If you merely mean the recent inquiry into that particular point with regard to the second ballot, I accept the new view that it might be better managed than by the old crude suggestions.

1511. It has been advocated as an education for proportional representation?—Yes.

1512. But it is quite capable of being separated upon other grounds?—Generally speaking I agree, but I do not wish to deal with the bearing of it on the parties.

1513. (*Chairman.*) You hold out no hope of this party system lapsing?—I thought the country was supposed to be proud of it beyond any other institution of which it could be proud.

1514. (*Lord Lochee.*) Supposing proportional representation were adopted, what effect do you think it would have upon the party system?—It is not what I suppose, but what the party leaders suppose.

1515. It is what you suppose I want to get at?—It is very difficult for one who is not favourable to the party system, or even the parliamentary system as we work it here, to give an impartial opinion as to the effect of a scheme which those who are favourable to the party system will not have.

1516. I want to get at whether, if a proportional representation system, such as Lord Courtney's, were adopted, it would touch the party system or affect it?—It is a purely speculative point of view based on history. I should say probably not. These systems are so strong that they survive any of the devices which their leaders think they cannot survive. They are probably eternal and immortal as has been said of other views which are theoretically destroyed.

1517. You have read the Reference to this Commission no doubt?—Yes.

1518. Does not that seem to imply that proportional representation is a desirable thing, and we are requested to inquire which is the best method of proportional representation having regard to our circumstances?—After heresy in regard to party government I cannot venture on heresy in regard to the appointment of Commissions.

The witness withdrew.

TENTH DAY.

Thursday, 27th May 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

LORD LOCHEE.

Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B.

The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

M. ETIENNE FLANDIN, Senator, called and examined.

[Translation.]

1518a. (*Chairman.*) Will you be good enough to explain to us the system of proportional representation recommended by you to the French Parliament on behalf of the *Commission du Suffrage Universel*? Perhaps, before doing so, you will first describe the

existing systems of election to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

(*M. Flandin.*) The Senate and the Chamber of Deputies are elected under different systems. The members of the Senate are elected for nine years,

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M. ETIENNE FLANDIN.

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and one-third of their number retire every three years. They are elected by a special electoral body composed of the deputies of the department, the members of the General Council, and of the *conseils d'arrondissement*, and delegates appointed by the municipal councils. The Constitution of 1875 laid down that each municipal council should appoint one delegate, irrespective of its population. Paris had thus one delegate equally with the smallest commune in France. By the constitutional revision of 1884 it was provided that municipal councils should elect a number of delegates varying from one to 30 according to the importance of the commune.

The electoral college meets in the capital of the department and proceeds to the election of the senators, under the presidency of the president of the civil court of the capital, assisted by the two oldest and the two youngest electors present at the opening of the sitting. At the first and the second elections no candidate is elected unless he obtains an absolute majority, *i.e.*, one-half *plus* one of the votes cast. At the third poll a relative majority suffices.

The Chamber of Deputies is directly elected by universal suffrage. All deputies are elected on the single-member system; senators, on the other hand, are elected, in the departments which return more than one, by the *scrutin de liste*. Each administrative division in the departments and each municipal division in Paris and Lyons elects a deputy. Divisions with a population of over 100,000 return an additional deputy for every 100,000, or fraction of 100,000, inhabitants. In this case they are subdivided.

To be elected at the first count a candidate must obtain an absolute majority of the votes cast and an absolute minimum of votes equal to a quarter of the total electorate. At the second ballot, which takes place a fortnight after the first, a relative majority suffices. All the candidates are permitted to stand again, but in practice the contest is generally confined to the two who obtained most votes at the first ballot.

These are the present systems of election.

1518b. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) What are the criticisms made by your Committee upon the present method, and what is the system you propose?

(*M. Flandin.*) The first criticism is that our divisions do not represent either equal areas or equal electorates. The choice of the *arrondissement* as the electoral unit results in extraordinary anomalies. In one (Barcelonnette) there are 3,443 electors; in another (Sarlat) 32,149. Looking from one *arrondissement* to another, sometimes within the same department, you will find a deputy elected here by 3,000 and there by 30,000 electors. Consequently the value of the elector's vote varies according to the *arrondissement* in which he lives, and the accident of a change of residence may alter his influence on the affairs of his country by one-half or three-quarters. Universal suffrage appears to assume the equality of electors. If 3,000 electors receive the same representation as 30,000, are not each of these 3,000 electors given 10 votes instead of one?

But we have a graver criticism to offer. In the report which I submitted to the Chamber of Deputies on behalf of the *Commission du Suffrage Universel* I prepared, for my colleagues to reflect upon, two tables which appeared to me exceedingly suggestive. In the first I summed up the votes received by the elected deputies in the elections which have taken place since the promulgation of the Constitution of 1875. These are the votes represented. In a second I added together the number of votes received by unsuccessful candidates and the number of abstentions, thus producing the total of votes unrepresented. What conclusion follows from these two tables? It is this: that in the course of all the references to the electorate which have taken place since 1875 the average of votes represented has been 45·6 per cent. The numbers elected to our legislative assemblies have not represented, on the average, one-half of the electors. We reach, in fact, this remarkable paradox, that in the name of the majority principle it is a minority which governs and is master of the country, which can pledge its finances, decide upon war, and play, by a vote, with the future of the country. Is that representative

government? Is that respect for the principle inscribed in the Declaration of the rights of man and citizen: "The law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has the right, in person or by his representative, to assist in its formation"? To make the half *plus* one everything, the half *minus* one nothing, is not only a brutal sacrifice of minorities, it is the negation of representative government. We protest against the confusion which has been artificially created between two things essentially different—decision and representation. Logic no doubt demands that in every deliberative assembly the majority shall decide; but in elections there is no question of decision, but of representation. A nation electing its deputies is simply providing itself with representatives. The more clearly it understands that the decision of the majority of the representative body is really the expression of the national will, the more vigilance should it exercise to secure that the representative body shall be the faithful image of the country. This truth was excellently expressed by Mirabeau: "An assembly," he said, "to be legitimate, ought to reproduce, in their proportions, all the elements of the electoral body. Assemblies are to a nation, what a reduced map is to its physical conformation. Whether on a small scale or a large, the copy should always exhibit the same proportions as the original." The *arrondissement* constituted, in our opinion, too restricted an electorate to afford safeguards against the threefold danger of electoral corruption, administrative pressure, and the predominance of particular over national interests. We ask for constituencies which shall be less unequal and also larger in size. The more extended the electorate, the more will the elected feel his conscience fortified against the pressure of individuals, and the easier it will be to ensure to each opinion its legitimate share of representation. We ask for the replacement of the single-member system on the basis of the *arrondissement* by the list system with proportional representation on the basis of the department. We consider the institution of proportional representation as the essential foundation of the new electoral régime. To reduce parties (in effect) to the alternative of "all or nothing" is to falsify at once universal suffrage and parliamentary government; universal suffrage, because minorities are reduced either to abstention or to dishonourable coalitions which enable the malcontents of one party to triumph with the assistance of its adversaries; parliamentary government, because the elected member enters parliament as the representative not so much of an opinion as of a *clientèle*. If he desires to preserve his seat he will yield insensibly to the temptation to use, or rather to abuse, his parliamentary influence for the purpose of placing in all public positions which confer any local influence men capable of becoming useful instruments to secure his re-election. Thus arises and develops one of the worst evils under which a nation can suffer—the interference of politicians in administration, resulting in arbitrariness and favouritism. Proportional representation would afford efficacious remedies for most of the evils I have mentioned. It would greatly mitigate, if not entirely do away with, the curse of abstention. It is not always indifference which keeps the elector from the poll; it is also the feeling of his inability to secure the election of the candidate of his choice. On the day when such an elector, who does not vote now because the exercise of his privilege would be a futile demonstration, becomes assured of being represented thenceforward in proportion to the strength of his party, we may be sure that he will go to the poll, and that the number of abstentions will be sensibly reduced. But besides diminishing the evil of abstentions we shall have lessened the acrimony of electoral contests. With the assurance which proportional representation gives to each party of securing its proper share, the rivalry of persons will give place to the rivalry of programmes. Each party will defend in all sincerity its political principles; none will have to forfeit its dignity by humiliating compromises. The successful candidates will represent, not a coalition of interests, but definite opinions, organised parties, clear-cut programmes. Just

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because Parliament will have become the most exact reflection possible of the country, all chance of a conflict between Parliament and public opinion will disappear. Parliament will reflect all shades of popular preference and the majority and minority in the chamber will bear exactly the same proportion to one another as the majority and minority in the electorate.

It seems to us difficult to contest the superiority of the proportional to the majority system from the theoretic standpoint. But how is proportional representation to be organised in a practical way? It is especially on this point that you await my explanations.

There is no lack of systems of proportional representation. Their name is legion. The facile imagination of the publicist has given itself free rein in devising them. You will perhaps permit me, if I am not to abuse your attention and good will, to confine myself to the system which I proposed to the *Commission du Suffrage Universel*, and which the Committee accepted and authorised me to defend before Parliament. I hasten to add that all the originators of rival systems have united in support of the Committee's proposals. Two conditions appeared to me indispensable if the idea of proportional representation was to find acceptance in France. In the first place the liberty, the sovereignty of the elector must be respected; in the second, no formality must be imposed upon him the complication of which might cause him trouble. This double consideration led us to depart on certain points from the Belgian law, which has been explained to you by Count Goblet d'Alviella. In that law there are excellent provisions, which we have borrowed; but it is based on the idea that, the list having been drawn up by a party, all the adherents of the party are bound to vote for it without any modification whatever. The elector who adds or cancels a name renders his vote invalid. This severity appeared to us irreconcilable with the legitimate independence of the French elector. It runs the risk of substituting for the sovereignty of the popular vote the tyranny of committees. The Bill which we submitted to the French Parliament absolutely guarantees the right of the elector to make up his voting paper exactly as he wishes. He can vote for all the candidates on one list or take the names he prefers from different lists. His liberty is complete. For reasons which I shall explain to you in a moment, we carry our respect for his sovereignty so far as to recognise his right either to distribute the votes at his disposal among a number of candidates equal to the number of deputies to be elected, or to concentrate, to accumulate them on one or more candidates whose election he is especially anxious to ensure.

Just as we propose to respect the absolute liberty of the elector, so we intend to abstain from disturbing his habits. He will continue to vote under the proportional as he would under the majority list system. All that we ask, we ask of the candidate, not of the elector.

The candidate, when he makes the declaration of candidature required by our law, will be obliged to specify the list to which he will belong, and to which alone are to be attributed the votes which accrue to him.

The economy of our system rests on the very simple assumption that the elector who gives a vote to a candidate may be presumed to give his adhesion, to the extent of one unit, to the list to which that candidate belongs. If he has voted for all the candidates on one list, he is presumed by his action to have given his adhesion to the programme of that list; if he has voted for candidates belonging to different lists, he is presumed to have desired to bring proportional representation into operation on his own voting paper in the manner indicated by his preferences. Hence his vote has a double value—as an individual vote it accrues to the candidate in whose favour it is expressed, and as a list vote it accrues to the list to which the candidate belongs.

The next process is, by adding together the total of the votes obtained by all the candidates of the same list to determine the "electoral mass" of that list. It then only remains to distribute the seats among the

different lists in proportion to the number of votes received by their candidates.

An example will make the matter clear. There are five deputies to be elected, and three lists put forward: A, B, C.

One elector votes for the five candidates of list A. He has given one vote to each of the candidates of list A and five votes to list A.

Another elector votes for four candidates from list A and one from list B. He has given a personal vote to each of the candidates for whom he has voted, and as he has voted for four candidates from list A and one from list B, he has given four votes to list A and one to list B.

A third elector votes for one candidate on list A, three on list B, and one on list C. He has given a personal vote for each of the candidates for whom he has expressed his preference, and he has given one vote to list A, three votes to list B, and one vote to list C.

Adding together the votes obtained by the candidates on the lists A, B, C, we obtain the "electoral mass" of each list, and each list will receive a number of seats proportional to the number of votes amassed by all the candidates upon it taken together.

To obtain this result only two things are necessary, both very simple and both independent of the elector, whose habits and whose liberty remain undisturbed. These requirements are: (1) The declaration by the candidate of which I have already spoken; (2) an arithmetical operation by the returning officer's staff.

The candidates, as already explained, have to specify the list to which they belong in order that the votes which accrue to them personally may be attributed exclusively to that list.

"A list," in the words of our Bill, "is constituted by the grouping of candidates who present themselves conjointly to the electorate."

The list is deposited at the Prefecture and affixed to the door of every polling station. The elector knows, therefore, that in giving a vote to such and such a candidate he is giving his preference, to the extent of one unit, to the list to which that candidate belongs. It is for the elector to fill up his voting paper in accordance with his own wishes. He votes as he would vote under the majority list system. The polling authority adds together the votes given for each candidate, as it would under the majority list system. The only difference is that the Revising Committee, after having ascertained the number of votes given for each candidate, and then, by adding together the votes obtained by the whole number, the total of each list, must effect the proportional distribution of the seats between the different lists. This object will be attained by the aid of the simple method of calculation known in Belgium by the name of its inventor, Professor d'Hondt.

Professor d'Hondt formulated his method in these words:—"We must find a number which, taken as the measure corresponding to one seat, divides into the totals obtained by the parties as many times as there are seats, neglecting (necessarily) all quantities and surpluses smaller than this electoral measure."

His method is to divide the electoral mass of each list successively by 1, 2, 3, 4 . . . up to the number of vacancies. The quotients are then arranged in order of magnitude until the number of vacancies is reached. The last of these quotients, which corresponds to the last seat to be filled, serves as common divisor, so that to each list are attributed a number of seats equal to the number of times this divisor is contained in its electoral mass. This calculation appears at first sight very complicated; but if you will be good enough to follow the operations I am going to perform at the blackboard you will recognise that it is in reality extremely simple. Remember, further, that it concerns the Committee of Revision only and not the elector at all.

There are six members to be elected, and three lists before the Committee—A, B, and C.

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They have obtained respectively—

List A.		List B.		List C.	
Candidate.	Votes.	Candidate.	Votes.	Candidate.	Votes.
1	56,000	1	36,000	1	36,000
2	55,900	2	35,800	2	25,999
3	54,850	3	35,750	3	25,800
4	54,848	4	35,002	4	25,775
5	54,700	5	35,000	5	25,750
6	54,500	6	34,960	6	25,602
Electoral mass -	331,798		212,512		154,926

Divide each of these electoral masses successively by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, i.e., until we reach the number of members to be elected.

We get the following results:—

List A.	List B.	List C.
$331,798 \div 1 = 331,798$	$212,512 \div 1 = 212,512$	$154,926 \div 1 = 154,926$
2 = 165,899	2 = 106,256	2 = 77,463
3 = 110,599	3 = 70,837	3 = 51,642
4 = 82,949	4 = 53,128	4 = 38,731
5 = 66,359	5 = 42,502	5 = 30,981
6 = 55,299	6 = 33,418	6 = 25,821

Arrange these quotients in order of magnitude until you reach 6, the number of members to be elected:—

1st quotient	331,798 (list A).
2nd "	212,512 (list B).
3rd "	165,899 (list A).
4th "	154,926 (list C).
5th "	110,599 (list A).
6th "	106,256 (list B).

The sixth quotient, which corresponds to the sixth seat to be filled, forms the common divisor.

List A obtains three seats, list B two seats, list C one seat. List A has a right to three seats because its electoral mass, 331,798, contains the common divisor, 106,256, three times; list B to two seats, because its electoral mass, 212,512, contains the common divisor twice; list C to one seat, because its electoral mass, 154,926, contains the common divisor once.

The number of seats falling to each list being determined, it only remains to announce, from each list, the candidates who have obtained the greatest number of votes, and, in case of equality, the oldest. The Committee of Revision will therefore declare elected the three first candidates of list A, the two first candidates of list B, and the first candidate of list C. The remaining candidates of each list will be declared first, second, third . . . "supplementaries." If, in the course of the Parliament, one or more of the elected members vacate their seats for any cause, they will be replaced by the "supplementaries" of the list to which they belong, in the order shown on the table. Under our system, in fact, it will never be necessary to have recourse to bye-elections which might destroy the equilibrium of the proportional representation obtained by the method I have just explained.

1518c. (Sir C. Eliot.) Is it not the case that you give the elector the power of repeating the name of one candidate several times on his voting-paper?

(M. Flandin.) Certainly. Your observation brings me to the second part of my explanation. Up to this point we have proceeded on the hypothesis that the lists contain a number of candidates equal to the number of members to be elected. But ought isolated candidatures to be prohibited? Should each party be obliged to present a complete list, even if it cannot hope for the success of more than a limited number of candidates? We were of opinion that such a demand was unjustifiable. We decided that, while a list might not contain more names than there were members to be elected, it might bear a lesser number; and we added (reproducing the Belgian law):—

"Isolated candidatures are considered as constituting "each a separate list."

If we confined ourselves to these provisions, it is obvious that the isolated candidature and the incomplete list would be placed in a position of such disadvantage that their success would prove practically impossible. The whole economy of the system we recommend rests, as you will have observed, on the fact that each vote has a double value. As a personal vote it counts in favour of the candidate designated by name, and as a list vote it counts in favour of the list to which the candidate belongs. Now consider what will happen. Suppose a constituency called upon to elect five members. If the list contains five names each candidate will have his personal vote, and the list will thus obtain five. If the list contains only one name the candidate will have one vote, and the list also will only have one vote. It is obvious that, in these circumstances, isolated candidatures and incomplete lists would be condemned to certain failure, for they would never succeed in securing the quotient—the *quorum* which gives rise to the right to representation.

It appeared to us that this situation could be remedied by authorising the elector to repeat the name of a candidate on his voting paper as many times as he has votes at his disposal. The elector has a right to as many votes as there are members to be elected in the constituency. These votes he may, according to his inclination, either divide among a number of candidates equal to the number of members to be elected or accumulate upon one or more candidates. In this way we propose to restore what I believe you call "fair play." We had the less hesitation in proposing this adaptation of the cumulative vote to the rules of proportional representation because we have discovered a means of surmounting a serious difficulty in the way of allowing an elector to borrow candidates from different lists, or, to use the time-honoured expression, to "panacher" his voting paper. If the right of *panache* is conceded, we were told, it is to be feared that the rival parties may come to an arrangement among themselves to cause the defeat of the most prominent candidates—the "heads of lists." One party, calculating that it cannot obtain all the seats, will assign a portion of its votes to the second or third-rate candidates of the opposing list, so as to eliminate the candidates of whom, by reason of their eminence, it is particularly afraid. The latter will then find themselves ousted, because they will have obtained a less number of personal votes. The importance of this objection must not be exaggerated. It is to be remembered that in giving a vote to the bottom candidate of list A so as to exclude the head of the list the elector definitively assures list A of a list vote which will contribute to ensure for it an electoral quotient. It is by no means certain that the list vote by which it pleases him to benefit the bottom candidate of list A will not in the event benefit the first name on that list. The game may be very dangerous, for if the elector thinks to deprive the first candidate of a personal vote by voting for the last candidate, he is at the same time withdrawing his list vote from his own party for the benefit of list A, and there is nothing to assure him that the first candidate of list A will not profit by this fact, so just when he is trying to exclude him from Parliament he will, on the contrary, be ensuring for him the list vote which will bring him in. Moreover, compared with the few electors disposed to have recourse to these contemptible tactics, how many others are there who would obey the more honourable impulse to choose (if they did not vote exclusively for the men of their own party) the representatives best qualified to defend their locality? It is not only political interests which are fought for in Parliament; there are local interests to be supported, and the elector should desire to entrust them to men of high standing, even if they belong to the opposite party.

The objection then is far from unanswerable, but the power given to the elector to accumulate the votes at his disposal upon one or more candidates would be a means of avoiding the danger. Parties would have the opportunity of establishing a kind of classification,

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an order of priority among their candidates, and ensuring the success of those to whose return they attach particular importance; and the electors would exhibit their preferences freely.

Observe that the list could not be prejudiced by the accumulation of votes on one candidate, because the votes gained by one particular candidate benefit his colleagues on the list just as much—if not as personal votes, at least as list votes. Whether I vote for the six candidates of list A individually or whether I repeat six times on my voting paper the name of the sixth candidate on that list, I contribute in any case six votes to list A. And that is the important point for the candidates of that list. It matters little that they have a smaller number of personal votes if they obtain the number of list votes necessary to bring them up to the point of participating in the distribution of the seats.

Shall I add that the cumulative vote would do much to counteract the gravest objection brought against proportional representation? How, it is asked, will you reconcile the simple mind of the elector to the fact that a candidate who receives 10,000 votes will get into Parliament, while one who receives 40,000 will not? Well, we answer that with the cumulative vote 10,000 disciplined electors, giving (if there are four seats to be filled) their four votes to the same candidate, will succeed in ensuring him a number of votes equal to that obtained by the candidates of the opposing list. The paradox will certainly not disappear entirely; for the whole system of proportional representation rests on the postulate that minorities ought to be represented; but it will be less apparent.

Let me make my conclusion clearer by an example.

Four members to be elected.

Two lists put forward—A and B.

List A contains four candidates, who have obtained respectively—

1st candidate	41,000	votes.
2nd	40,900	„
3rd	40,100	„
4th	37,000	„
	159,000	„

The electoral mass of list A is therefore 159,000 votes.

List B only contains one name. 10,000 electors have voted for this solitary candidate, but they have concentrated on him all the four votes at their disposal. They have in fact given him 40,000 personal votes, and by the same act 40,000 list votes. The electoral mass of list B is therefore 40,000 votes. Now apply the d'Hondt method. Divide the electoral mass of each list successively by 1, 2, 3, and 4 (there being 4 members to elect) and arrange the four quotients in order of magnitude. The result is as follows:—

List A.	List B.
Electoral mass 159,000.	Electoral mass, 40,000.
÷ 1 = 159,000.	
2 = 79,500.	
3 = 53,000.	
4 = 39,750.	
1st quotient 159,000 (list A).	
2nd „ 79,500 (list A).	
3rd „ 53,000 (list A).	
4th „ 40,000 (list B).	

Declared elected, therefore, the first three candidates of list A, who have obtained respectively 41,000, 40,900, and 40,100 personal votes, and the one candidate of list B, with 40,000 votes. The single candidate of list B will carry the day over the fourth candidate of list A, as having obtained 40,000 votes against 37,000. What objection can be raised by the simple-minded elector?

This combination of considerations determined us to reserve to the elector the power to unite his votes, if he thinks fit, upon one or more candidates. It is, in our view, a desirable mode of perfecting our system, but I hasten to add that it does not necessarily form an integral and essential part of it. The system can undoubtedly work without the cumulative vote.

Such is the reform which the *Commission du Suffrage Universel* is at this moment proposing for adoption by the French Parliament. We do not see what insurmountable difficulties would be found in practice to confront proportional representation. There is no rigid formalism to subject the elector to complications or exactions with which he would find it troublesome to comply. Scrupulous respect for his liberty, his sovereignty, is pushed to the extremest limits, because we recognise his right to dispose of all his votes in accordance with his preferences and the best interests of the candidates whose success he desires to secure. He is not the slave of a committee; he is its master. Assured henceforth that in depositing his vote in the ballot box he is not reduced to a sterile exhibition of impotence, he would be without excuse if he neglected to make use of his prerogative as a citizen. Those parties, too, would be without excuse who, with the certainty of obtaining their legitimate part in the representation of the nation, abandoned themselves to the unworthy practices of polemics. It would mean peace and dignity in electoral contests, and for all doctrines the assurance of a future.

1518d. (*Sir C. Eliot.*) Under the reform you propose, how many seats would be combined in an election?

(*M. Flandin.*) That depends on the population of the division. In principle, each department would form a division. At the same time we anticipate the possibility either of grouping several departments (in exceptional cases) in one division, or of dividing a department into several divisions. We wish the elector to have a minimum of four and a maximum of 10 members to elect.

1518e. (*Sir C. Eliot.*) You would not agree to the division of the country into constituencies returning only three members?

(*M. Flandin.*) A constituency returning only three members would be much too restricted to allow proportional representation to operate in the most practical and at the same time equitable way.

1518f. (*Sir C. Eliot.*) Would the counting of the votes proceed in the same way as hitherto?

(*M. Flandin.*) Exactly. Nothing would be changed. The returning officials would add up the votes of the candidates as under the majority system. The Revising Committee only, which is entrusted with the declaration of the successful candidates, would have to carry out the proportional distribution of the seats among the different lists and apply the method of calculation I have just explained.

1518g. (*Sir C. Eliot.*) What is your opinion of the transferable vote?

(*M. Flandin.*) We do not concern ourselves with it, because of the difference between your procedure, where there is only one ballot and the candidate who obtains a relative majority is declared elected, and ours, under which a second ballot is held when no absolute majority is obtained at the first count. Although there is no definite rule on the point, it is customary for the two candidates who obtained most votes at the first poll to be left to fight it out alone at the second. But I recognise the advantages of the alternative or transferable vote in countries where only one ballot is held. With election by relative majority at the first poll the situation may become very delicate in England, now that you no longer have, as formerly, your two great parties alone, Liberals and Conservatives, opposing one another. It may be in the true interests of justice to recognise, for example, the right of an elector of the Labour Party to express his desire, in the case of the candidate of his own party being in a minority, to transfer the benefit of his vote in the alternative to a candidate of another party—to a Liberal, for example, whose opinions would be more in consonance with his own tendencies. The method would be ingenious, and might mark an advance on the present state of things—apply a palliative to a situation whose dangers you recognise. At the same time it would be impossible by this means to ensure proportional representation in the true sense of the word—that is, to give each party its legitimate share of representation and make Parliament a relief map of

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the country. We regard proportional representation as infinitely preferable to the transferable alternative vote.

1518h. (*Sir C. Eliot.*) On what day do elections take place in France?

(*M. Flandin.*) They always take place on Sunday, and, unlike your practice, always on the same day all over France, and even in the Colonies.

1518i. (*Sir C. Eliot.*) Does the voting paper in France contain the names of all the candidates?

(*M. Flandin.*) No. Separate papers are distributed for each candidate. The excellent system of a single paper for all the candidates has not yet been introduced with us. We shall come to it, I hope, when we have secured the adoption of the system of the private room, where the elector marks on his voting paper the candidate of his choice.

1518j. (*Sir C. Eliot.*) Do you hope to succeed soon in obtaining the introduction of your system of proportional representation?—It would be premature to count on success in the present Parliament, but it is the solution of the future.

1518k. Is it the fact that the Radical party is hostile to the change?—Yes, most of the Radical deputies are opposed to it.

1518l. Why?—Because they form the majority of the Chamber. It is a natural tendency of majorities to believe themselves eternal. Remember the example of the Belgian Liberals, who show a close resemblance to our French Radicals. M. Goblet d'Alviella will have told you of the strong opposition they offered at first to the idea of proportional representation. They were its irreconcilable foes till the day when, crushed between the extreme parties—the Catholics on the one side, the Socialists on the other—they were not only defeated, but almost annihilated. Thereupon they examined their consciences, and, recognising too late the advantages of the proportional representation which they had rejected, founded leagues to demand it. It was the turn of the Catholics (now become masters of the situation) to have nothing to do with it. Fortunately, the straightforward and eloquent words of men such as M. Beernaert and M. de Smet de Naeyer were able to secure a hearing from their party for the voice of reason and justice. At the moment when Belgium appeared doomed to a reckless struggle between extreme parties proportional representation stepped in to restore peace, and the Liberals, who rejected it in the first instance, have owed to it their re-entry into Parliament and the resumption of their place as a party. Our French Radicals would be well inspired if they pondered this

example. If violent disunion breaks out among the forces of the old "bloc," who knows what coalitions might produce? Already more than one Unified Socialist has entered Parliament with the assistance of votes from the Right against the Radical party. An especially significant election took place in the department of Saône-et-Loire, where a seat passed to a Unified Socialist which had been occupied for long years by one of the most authoritative leaders of the Radical party, M. Sarrien. The precise advantage of proportional representation would be the prevention of not over-moral coalitions by assuring to each party its legitimate share of representation.

1518m. What are the results of your system of the second ballot?—They are deplorable. It is at the second ballot that the coalitions are formed, thanks to which minorities may win the election. It is in consequence of compromises at that ballot that the deputy too often finds himself in Parliament the representative and prisoner of a *clientèle*.

1518n. You have undertaken a campaign in the country in favour of proportional representation, have you not? Are you satisfied with the reception you have met with? How do your meetings go off?—The reception we have met with has exceeded our hopes. We have visited most of the big towns in France, and we shall, I hope, continue these great meetings, consisting of thousands of electors. Wherever we have gone I have had the ungrateful task of explaining the mechanism of proportional representation. In spite of the dryness of the subject, the crowd listened with remarkable attention. Then, each party successively, a leading member advocated the reform. The presence of men of the most opposite political opinions was the best proof that we were pursuing no party object but a work of political fairness. All hands were raised to applaud the reform. In one large town we even had, one day, a most agreeable surprise. Certain Radical colleagues of ours had accompanied us out of courtesy, while declaring, not without irony, that they could come without fear of conversion to our ideas. Having seen the enthusiastic reception given by their electors to the reform, they ended by lifting up their own hands as well. It is on demonstrations in the country that we count for enforcing the reform, the fear of the elector being often for the elected the beginning of wisdom.

(*Chairman.*) We are exceedingly obliged to you, M. Flandin, for your kindness in supplying us with this lucid explanation of the system you have recommended for adoption in your own country.

The witness withdrew.

ELEVENTH DAY.

Wednesday, 9th June 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*):

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.
Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D., D.C.L.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*.)

Sir WILLIAM R. ANSON, Bart., M.P., called and examined.

1519. (*Chairman.*) You are Member of Parliament for Oxford University?—Yes.

1520. You are a Member of the Central Committee of the Proportional Representation Society?—Yes.

1521. As such, you have gone into the question of proportional representation?—Yes.

1522. In the first place, do you consider that the defects of the present system are in need of change?—Yes; I think the defects are numerous and serious.

1523. Chiefly in the direction of the limitation of choice of the electorate?—Yes. In some constituencies there is a settled hopeless minority, as, for instance, in

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Sir W. R. ANSON, BART., M.P.

[Continued.]

Wales; and in others there is a considerable number of voters who really never have the opportunity of giving an intelligent vote, because they never have submitted to them the sort of candidate for whom they would gladly go to the poll. They consequently vote for the candidate whom they dislike least on one occasion, and if they are dissatisfied with the set of politics, when a General Election comes round they vote on the other side, and the result is that a small change in number from one side to the other produces very violent fluctuations in the representation of the country in those cases in which the minority is not in a hopeless state.

1524. Do you consider that the effect of this violent oscillation taking place is an evil?—I think both are evils. I think for any large number of persons to be in a continual minority (as is the case with the Conservative party in Wales) is a disturbing factor. It cannot be said that they are represented by the Conservatives elsewhere, because their local interests are so different. The Conservatives of Wales are not represented as regards their interests by the Conservatives of Sussex. This continuous state of being in a minority is what brought Belgium to the verge of revolution. On the other hand, these violent changes in the personnel of Parliament and in the balance of power of parties, I think, are not good for the country.

1525. The effect of the present system has been in the past to give the party in power a considerable majority?—Yes.

1526. Would you be prepared to advocate any plan by which that majority might be considerably lessened?—I should. The majority is unreal, and from the way in which it has been brought into being, I think the effect of the whole conditions on Parliamentary debate is such that the relations of Ministers to their followers suffer. I mean this: the single member constituency necessitates very close and strict organisation if you are to get a result; because if four or five candidates stand, the result does not in any way represent the views of the constituency, or, at any rate, of the majority of the constituency, as we have seen in recent cases. So the organisations set to work and reduce the choice to candidates on either side who will follow the strict party lines, and one result of that is that the choice of the electors is extremely narrowed. Another result is that very capable men, whose presence in Parliament would be of very considerable value, are kept out. To go back to the past, if organisation had been as strict in 1880 as it is now, Mr. Goschen, who was opposed to what I suppose would then be called the great constructive policy of the Liberal party—the extension of the county franchise—would have been ruled out; he would have been in the position of the Unionist Free Trader, and would have had very great difficulty in finding a constituency to elect him. As at was he was elected, and for a single member constituency, because organisation under the much more extended influence of single member constituencies had not reached its present height. He came into Parliament, but was unable to take office, and found himself in frequent opposition to his party. I think it is a disadvantage that capable and independent men should be kept out of the House of Commons by the rigorous organisation which the single-member constituency necessitates. I think it is also a disadvantage that a great mass of the electorate should never have the choice offered to them which would give them a really intelligent interest in politics, and that they should sway to and fro, as Lord Hugh Cecil described it in a deputation to Mr. Asquith, like a person who has first a toothache on one side of his face and then a toothache on the other.

1527. Do you think the present system does undoubtedly tend to destroy the chances of the independent candidate?—It does.

1528. Although you admit that even up to the present time there have been men of independent views on both sides of the House?—Yes; but the men who have expressed independent views and whose independent views are very decided have generally ended in changing their party altogether.

1529. The tendency, I suppose, is that the party machine either brings them into line or drives them out altogether?—That is so.

1530. Of the various schemes which have been suggested to alleviate this condition of things, you are in favour of the one known as the Single Transferable Vote?—Yes.

1531. As advocated by Lord Courtney and by the Proportional Representation Society?—Yes.

1532. Have you compared that scheme with others, such as the Belgian List system?—Yes, I have studied the Belgian system. I think that leaves a great deal too much to party organisation and a great deal too little to the individual choice of the voter. Also I do not like the system of the supplementary member, who is like the twelfth man in a cricket eleven, to come in if a by-election is rendered necessary by the failure of one of the persons elected. I should be sorry to do away with by-elections, I think they are useful things as indicating the trend of opinion in the country, though now, under our present conditions, I think they exaggerate to a very great extent the trend of political opinion.

1533. In any system whereby the constituencies are increased six or seven fold, would you still be prepared to have by-elections?—Yes. I think that if a member dies or moves to the other House, or takes office out of the country, or retires, the constituency should not lose its representation. I admit the great difficulty of a by-election under the proportional representation system.

1534. It would be practically impossible for any one individual to make himself acquainted with the whole of the area or any large proportion of the electors?—It would be difficult.

1535. Surely there would be the further difficulty that supposing the man who died happened to be the one representative of a small minority, that minority would in all probability lose its representation?—I think it would. I think it would be a case in which minorities must suffer, though one regrets it. I do not really see why the individual should not be as well acquainted with the constituency generally at a by-election as he would be at a general election. One would suppose that every member represented the whole of the constituency, although each only represented the particular opinions of a group.

1536. One of the objections which have been urged to this scheme, is that if the constituencies are six or seven times as large as the present ones, there is no possibility of any individual really becoming acquainted with the constituency?—I do not know that the difficulty should be greater than it was before the reform of 1885, when a member was member for a very much larger area than now and was regarded by his constituency as representing them—whether it was a great town like Liverpool or a large and possibly straggling county. The member for Liverpool, I think, was regarded, and regarded himself, as representing the entire interests of Liverpool, and as regards the members for, say, Oxfordshire (for which there were three members), in the same way each thought he represented the county.

1537. But the duties and requirements of a member have surely very much increased since those days?—The constituency is more exacting in wanting his presence, but I think it would be rather a good thing if a change resulted in making the constituencies less exacting, because actual physical impossibility would stand in the way of a member being hacked about as he is now on every occasion when any part of the constituency wants to see him.

1538. The tendency would be that the close connection which now exists between a member and his constituency would be lessened?—Yes, I think the connection might be less close in one sense, but more real in another. I mean, there can be no doubt that there are a great number of candidates chosen by the party organisations who do not stand in any close relation to the constituency before they go there.

1539. You think that is prevalent at present?—I think that does prevail to a considerable extent at present.

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[Continued.]

1540. But you do not anticipate any disadvantage in the future supposing some scheme such as proportional representation were adopted?—No, I should not be afraid of it on the ground that a member would be too remote from the whole of his constituency because the constituency was bigger.

1541. Then I may take it that you do not like the Belgian system, first of all, on account of the party organisation being made too severe, and secondly, on account of the supplementary lists?—Yes, I do not think that is a convenient way to meet the difficulty of by-elections. When I say "convenient" I mean I do not think it is satisfactory.

1542. As compared with the French system, the second ballot system, what do you say?—The second ballot system shows you whom the majority of the constituency do not like, but it also leads to what one might almost call corrupt arrangements between two minorities to keep out some one whom they dislike more than they dislike one another.

1543. That difficulty has been felt in France, I think?—It has.

1544. You would not be prepared to see anything of the sort adopted here?—I do not think the second ballot is a solution of the difficulty at all.

1545. Have you gone into the question of the alternative vote, where more than two candidates stand for a single member constituency?—Yes, I think there are practical difficulties about it, but I think I should prefer that to the present system.

1546. You regard the present system whereby such results happen as happened the other day at Attercliffe, for instance, and also in the Colne Valley a little time ago, as very unsatisfactory?—Yes, I do. I think the effects of our present system are very far-reaching. I mean that this strict organisation not only limits the choice of the electors and keeps out good candidates, but is carried on into the House of Commons, and the party lines are much more rigorous and independent opinion is less freely expressed. There is no one, or hardly any one, who is persuadable in debate in the House of Commons, and debate consequently becomes very mechanical. People say what they have to say to the best of their power, knowing that everybody will go into his own lobby at the end of it without reference to anything that has been said on the other side. I think that is one disadvantage, and I do not think that was so always. In the period before 1885, still more before 1868, there was more openness of mind, so far as I can gather from reading. Of course, I have no personal experience.

1547. The scheme you suggest surely makes it more complicated?—It would produce a greater variety of opinion in the House of Commons. The party would be less dependent on the ministers, and perhaps the ministers less dependent on strict party organisation. At present, knowing the violent swings of the pendulum, ministers and followers hold together because of the risks of a general election, and that, I think, unduly increases the power of ministers. It increases the power of ministers in the House to an extent which enables them to say to their followers: "We must have certain measures; we must have them in a certain time. We must therefore apportion the time, and whether the thing is discussed or not our Bill must go through." The followers know that if they disobey a general election may ensue. The experience on several occasions in the past has shown that there is a very violent change. It is not a desirable thing that a majority should be mechanical or that the Executive should have that power, or that there should be these violent changes which make one side, when it comes in, say that everything that the others have done is wrong and they must undo it. It destroys continuity in our legislation; it destroys interest in debate; and I think it creates a false relation between the ministry and their followers.

1548. You do not feel any alarm that the majority might be so lessened that the Government would not obtain an effective majority to carry on the Government?—If such alarm is felt, it is because our opinions of an effective majority have become exaggerated. I should look at that in two ways. I should say first

that a Government might go on very comfortably with a working majority very much smaller than anything we have seen in the last 15 or 20 years, and also that a Government should not be so sensitive of defeat in matters which were not really vital. The Government might very well limit the occasions on which it would say to its followers: "Now this is necessary to our existence, and unless you stick to us we shall have to resign." To put it in the language of the House of Commons, the cases in which the Government Tellers were put on might be very much reduced, and even in cases where they were put on and the Government were defeated, it seems absurd that a Government should go out or that it should be thought necessary that a Government should go out on a snap vote.

1549. That undoubtedly would give greater independence to the rank and file?—It would give greater independence to the rank and file, and I think it would also make the Government stronger, not in the power of dictating to its followers on every conceivable question, but generally in the House of Commons and in the country in carrying out its policy.

1550. Do you apprehend any danger, under this system, of groups arising, and of there being four or five or possibly more distinct groups with their own organisations?—We have them now. We are not saved from groups now. We have four groups in the House of Commons at this moment.

1551. But two only are effective—it is a dual party system at present?—That is really an accident of the very large majority by which the Liberal party was returned at the general election. I venture to think that it is rather phenomenal on either side that there should be such an immense majority. But there are the groups, and the fact that the Government has a sufficient following to be able to overrule all the others I should regard as an accident. The groups would be there if the Government majority was not so large—the Irish party, the Labour party, and the two regular Government and Opposition parties.

1552. But this proportional representation system would undoubtedly encourage the smaller groups?—I do not think it would encourage organised groups. I think it would encourage greater varieties of individual opinion, but I doubt very much whether it would tend to create the sort of camp that you have with the Labour Members or with the Irish Members.

1553. You do not think it would be any worse really than it is now?—No, I do not think it would.

1554. I take it you agree in your proposal with what is known as the single transferable vote?—Yes.

1555. Do you see any practical difficulties in the way of that being carried out?—No, the large practical difficulty is the construction of a scheme of redistribution.

1556. Of course, it involves redistribution?—It would involve redistribution.

1557. What is your minimum constituency?—I should prefer five as a minimum.

1558. But it might be three?—No doubt it might be three, but I should prefer five, because I wish to give a wide choice to the electors.

1559. You would like communities which have a local connection still to be preserved?—Wherever it was possible I would keep up the local character of the constituencies.

1560. For instance, the large cities you would like to retain as constituencies?—Yes.

1561. With regard to places like the present two-member constituencies, which, under any scheme, would only be entitled to return two, would you preserve them as two-member constituencies, or would you throw in the country round about?—I think that would rather depend on the character of the locality. I think it may very well be that some two-member constituencies might have the surroundings thrown in. I think that is a practical difficulty which would have to be encountered, and if we start with a minimum of three it would be absolutely necessary to increase those constituencies.

1562. For instance, a constituency like Norwich?—I should have thought that Norwich might be extended

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without detriment to its local character; but I do not really know enough of the locality to venture an opinion.

1563. Then, as regards large country districts with a thin population, to group several of those together would make it very difficult, would it not? Take the Highlands of Scotland, for instance?—Taking a large rural county, yes. The question is whether the character of the constituency differs in different portions of it.

1564. You would not lay down any hard-and-fast rule?—No, I should not.

1565. Would you like the system extended where practicable?—Yes.

1566. And if it was found to be impracticable, would you leave any place as it is just at present?—I should like to extend or diminish the number of members offered to the constituency in accordance with the local conditions. There might be cases in which you could come down to three, or rise to a considerably larger number, as in the case of a city like Liverpool.

1567. I do not know whether it is a fair question to ask, but you will, please, use your discretion whether you will answer it or not: What would you do with the Universities?—I should be very sorry to lose the University representation for the same reason that I want a variety in the House of Commons, and I think there are representatives of the Universities who certainly would not be in the House of Commons if they were not representatives of Universities. But it would be quite possible to take all the Universities of England—I would not say the Scotch Universities, because their character is different—and turn them into one constituency. I merely throw that out as a passing suggestion.

1568. That would retain the representation?—Give Oxford and Cambridge their four representatives, and take the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, London, Sheffield, Manchester, and Liverpool together. It is a possibility.

1569. Have you gone into the question of the actual conduct of an election? Do you think that would present any difficulties?—No. I was not present, I am sorry to say, at the counting of the votes at the Model election that was held. I merely voted to the best of my ability.

1570. The actual elector, you think, would soon understand the principle?—I think so. It really seemed to me not to present any difficulty. It is not nearly so difficult as the cumulative vote.

1571. In fact, as the Belgians understand it, you would think our electors could?—I should think our intelligence is not inferior to theirs.

1572. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) I think you said that you saw practical difficulties in the way of the alternative vote?—I was thinking of the alternative vote as applied to the single-member constituency. The same sort of difficulty in that case would arise as at a by-election. If there were three candidates and one was at the bottom of the poll, the question of striking him out and giving his votes to others, might be affected by the fact that he was everybody else's second man.

1573. But I do not fancy that is the way in which it is proposed to work it. You simply mark your preference for 1 and 2?—Then my difficulty would be solved.

1574. You see no objection to that system?—No.

1575. But, still, I gather you do not regard it as altogether satisfactory. Supposing one was to modify the present system by keeping single-member constituencies and giving the elector two choices instead of one, so that he indicates the second candidate he would like to see get in if his first candidate does not get in, do you think it would be sufficient to remove the present objections?—No, I do not think it would give the electors the variety of choice that I should like every elector to have.

1576. For you, the important point is the larger constituency?—Yes, it is.

1577. You think the Belgian system would not do in England. One of the objections you raise to it is that it does away with by-elections, but that might be altered. There would be no objection, if that were so, in allowing by-elections to continue as now. Would

you still object to the Belgian list system?—That, again, restricts the choice of the elector to a ticket, and I should like the electors to choose from among five individuals or so.

1578. But a single individual can stand by himself in Belgium theoretically, though it is not often done?—He could stand by himself. Yes, but unless he had a strong personal following, he would not have any chance. Unless he was on one of the lists which represents a substantial following, he would have no chance.

1579. It does not happen very often, but there is no reason why an independent member should not present himself in that way?—No, there is not.

1580. But, still, you do not think the list system would be suited to the English temperament?—I do not think it would.

1581. Do you think that party organisation has greatly increased during the last 20 years or so?—I think it has.

1582. Do you consider the effect of proportional representation would be to reduce it, because just the contrary has been said by some witnesses?—Of course there would be organisation. There would be great endeavour, no doubt, on the part of the different parties to secure as many seats as possible, but the wider choice given to the electorate would destroy the extreme efficiency of the organisation. I do not mean to say that organisation would not exist, but it would not be so effective in overruling the independent choice of the elector.

1583. But the argument is that the elector would be so puzzled by the variety of choice put before him, that he would take the advice given him by his party managers to vote for certain candidates?—Some electors would, but I think it would be better that an intelligent elector should have a choice which he can exercise without necessarily consulting the party managers. The unintelligent elector will always vote unintelligently, anyhow.

1584. As to the majority in the House of Commons, do you think a much smaller majority than has been usual of late years would be quite sufficient? Some figures that have been put before the Commission seemed to indicate that if strict proportional representation had been applied in 1895 there would have been no majority at all, and that the parties were absolutely equally balanced. Supposing it worked out with a majority of two or three for one side or the other, would it be possible to continue the Government with that?—I think followers would arrange themselves, and the country would settle the matter. Supposing a Government found that it could not carry on, and went to the country, I think the country would take care to settle it. One does not often get opinions so equally balanced. There were times in the fifties when it was difficult to form a government, but somehow the Government was carried on, and not badly.

1585. Do you think the question of proportional representation attracts much attention now among politicians; I mean among those who are interested in the working of elections?—Do you mean that it is a popular subject on a platform? I should be afraid not.

1586. But do you think it is often discussed?—I think it is a great deal discussed among people who think about politics, but I do not think anyone who went on to a platform to speak for a candidate on either side would take it up as a palatable subject.

1587. We had a French witness here the other day who assured us that he had addressed an audience of 6,000 at Rouen on the subject for three hours, and was heard with enthusiasm in an open-air meeting. Have you come to any conclusion as to whether the general opinion here is favourable to it or unfavourable?—No, I could not express any opinion on that point.

1588. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Would you be in favour of a partial application of the system?—Experimentally do you mean?

1589. Yes. It has been suggested that it might be applied to certain large cities as distinguished from the rest of the country?—Yes, I should like to see it. It is a matter on which the country might very well

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proceed by experiment, and I should be very glad to see it applied either to cities or to rural districts.

1590. It is just on the border of our Inquiry, and our Inquiry does not extend to local elections; but would you or would you not consider that the present system could be applied more advantageously to local elections than to parliamentary elections? Would you be in favour of beginning by experiment with local elections?—I think, in the general interest, I would rather see it begun with parliamentary elections. I mean, that the issues are larger, and you want a range of choice much more than in local elections, where the issues are comparatively very small.

1591. You spoke of the case of Wales and Ireland. Have you thought of any way in which you could apply the system to either Wales or Ireland so as to safeguard the representation of the minority?—It would involve a system of redistribution in Wales.

1592. Any application of the system would involve redistribution. I think we must take for granted that it would involve a substitution of large constituencies for small constituencies?—Yes.

1593. We do not want to go into details of the redistribution, but have you thought at all of how you would apply the system to either Wales or Ireland?—No, I have not worked out any definite scheme.

1594. Supposing the system—what we may call the Courtney system—were applied generally, how do you think it would work in practice? It has been suggested that, in practice, party machinery would still work; they would apply lists of candidates to be voted for *en bloc*, and the tendency of the elector would be to vote for this or that group. Should you agree with that?—I have no doubt, as I have said, that the party organisation would go on, but it would be less effective because the elector who somewhat resents the narrow choice of the party organisation now, would choose the candidate he liked. The party organisation would prevail among strict party people and among the people who would be glad to have someone to make up their minds for them, which is the case with a good many people,

The witness withdrew.

Mr. JAMES GIBB, M.P., called and examined.

Memorandum handed in by the Witness.

The vote is a more valuable thing to the elector under proportional representation than under the single member system. If the object of an intelligent elector is to give effect to his convictions he has a better opportunity of doing so with six candidates before him than if there were only two.

Proportional representation respects and builds upon the individuality of the elector, the only sure foundation of a safe and stable government.

Proportional representation better than any other scheme in the field enables electors to express their minds.

Proportional representation proceeds upon the assumption that this is a desirable thing to do; that if there are drawbacks to giving so much freedom to electors, the advantages in the long run are greater than any drawbacks.

In this assumption it perhaps differs from some other methods. The single-member system seems rather to imply a belief that the elector's liberty of choice must be narrowed, or he will abuse it.

It seems to me that, taught by experience of the single-member system, we have now arrived at a point when another step is due in the evolution of the people's liberties; when the individual elector should obtain a greater freedom of choice and therefore a more intimate relation to national affairs.

If electors are enabled to put more intelligence and conscience into their votes the nation is the gainer. Indeed, the character of the electorate is of paramount importance; one outcome of it being the character of the House of Commons.

The electors have not yet had a fair chance of showing what they can do in the making of a House of Commons. The question put to them is in such a form that they can hardly give an intelligible reply.

but it would not prevail with the man who really wanted to find the sort of representative who could express his view.

1595. We had evidence from a very interesting French witness, M. Flandin, who classified candidates under various heads—Conservatives and Radicals, and what he called the "Sauvage," by which I take it he meant the independent Member?—That is the view of the organiser.

1596. Would the "Sauvage" have much chance under the proportional representation system?—I think he would have a chance. You would get a variety here and there. I do not think that it is desirable to have too many, if you mean by "Sauvage," not so much "independent" as "incalculable."

1597. I hope I have not misrepresented the meaning of "Sauvage," but I have used the expression which M. Flandin used more than once. Practically, would the independent Member who is not supported by party organisation have much chance in England?—I think he would here and there, but not so much chance as under the Hare system, under which he would probably find some constituency somewhere or other among miscellaneous people in the United Kingdom. He certainly would have a chance here and there, the constituencies being sufficiently large.

1598. Your real objection is to the too strict organisation of the party system?—Yes, I think it has a very bad effect on the minds of the electors, and really on the political condition of the country. I think we are groaning under the severe organisation which is crushing the life out of politics.

1599. And yet without party organisation it would be difficult to carry on business in Parliament?—Quite so. One must have rules of some sort; but it is not necessary to be slaves to them.

1600. You think the system of proportional representation would be compatible with a party system?—I think it would. I should be very sorry to see the party system disappear.

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[Continued.]

(1) Would proportional representation tend to an equality of numbers on the two sides of the House? Only if the electors happened at the time to be so divided, and this is not always the case. Boys and girls come into the world in approximately regular proportions, but electors' views vary according to their interests and to the facts and considerations brought before their minds. The forces of Liberalism and Conservatism ebb and flow. I suppose no great measure of reform is carried without as a result a number of Liberals becoming Conservatives, and the relative strengths of the parties being consequently varied. They were Liberals because they wanted that reform. Their zeal slackens now that they have got it, and fresh changes appearing on the horizon fail to attract, perhaps even frighten them, and thenceforth they vote Conservative. On the other hand, the advocacy of certain changes gradually makes converts, and perhaps alters the balance in favour of Liberals. Liberal as I am, I would rather have a fair representation of the people in the House of Commons, and Liberalism ascendant in the House only when it is ascendant in the country, than I would have an unfair representation, sometimes unduly favourable to Liberalism.

(2) Would cliques and sections obtain undue representation? I think they sometimes now obtain undue representation by selling themselves to the highest bidder. Under proportional representation they would be represented according to their numbers. If by cliques and sections we refer to small bodies of electors holding exceptional views on isolated points, such as vaccination, their representative would probably belong to one of the parties, vaccination not being a large enough subject to found a general policy upon. But if by a section we mean a considerable body of opinion such as could aspire to form a group in the House, the single-member system does not prevent the separate representation of such, though it unduly accentuates the differences between the group and the party in the House it is most like.

(3) and (4) I am hopeful that costs under proportional representation might be less than they are now, and that for this reason. At an election some of the electors are strongly for you and some are strongly against you. Speaking generally, those electors will vote accordingly. But there is another class of electors, and upon them, unfortunately, under the single-member system, the result often depends. They are the apathetic, and to overcome their apathy by extensive advertising, &c., costs much money. Their electoral value would be less under proportional representation. As to the difficulty of working a large constituency, this also, I think, might be less under proportional representation than under our present system. With quickened interest, arising from a larger choice, the electors, I think, would take a more active part in the election, and probably there would be more heckling for the purpose of discriminating between the several candidates. The electors, in fact, would be seeking their candidates, instead of the candidates the electors. I think the legal limit of a candidate's expenses for a large constituency might well be reduced.

1601. (*Chairman.*) You are Member of Parliament for the Harrow Division of Middlesex?—Yes.

1602. You are also on the Committee of the Proportional Representation Society?—Yes.

1603. We should particularly like to hear your evidence with regard to the constituency which you now represent, which, I understand, is one of the largest in the country as far as the number of electors go?—At the General Election there were over 28,000 electors on the Register, and over 22,000 voted.

1604. So that you can speak with experience of a large number of electors?—Yes, in that particular constituency.

1605. Supposing that any scheme of redistribution comes about by which large areas are put into six- or seven-member constituencies, do you think it would be practicable for candidates to become acquainted with their constituents?—Certainly, if the constituency were not larger than that one.

1606. It has been often urged as an objection to any scheme of proportional representation that no man could ever become acquainted with his constituents?—He could not become personally acquainted with them. That would be impossible, nor do I think it is necessary.

1607. But could he attend frequent meetings?—Yes, I think so, certainly.

1608. Supposing by any scheme your division was added to several others, would it then be possible?—There are now 34,000 electors. That would give us, say, three members.

1609. I think it would work out a little more—about 12,000 to each member?—That is not quite three members.

1610. In all probability other constituencies would have to be added on to it?—I do not think, even in that size of constituency, you can become personally acquainted with everybody. I think that is out of the question, but I think you could with a larger constituency than that make your views sufficiently well known amongst the people, especially if there was more desire on their part to know what your views were, and that, I believe, would be the result of proportional representation, where electors had a larger choice.

1611. Quite apart from the question of whether feasible or not, do you think it necessary that the local connection which now exists between the member and the constituency should be continued?—I think it always will exist. I think there is already a prejudice, or at any rate a strong feeling on the part of people to have a local representative, and I think even under Mr. Hare's scheme you would find that the weight of local feeling would be very great, as certainly it would be under anything that is now proposed.

1612. From your memorandum I gather that your view is that the vote exercised by each individual ought to enable him to have as much choice as to where he places it as possible?—That is my view.

1613. So the larger the number of candidates before him the better it would be?—Certainly, the greater the value of the vote to him, and therefore the greater the value of his vote to the nation.

1614. Theoretically, you would be in favour of Mr. Hare's scheme?—That is a perfection.

1615. The larger the area the better?—Other things being equal, the larger the area the better.

1616. You would, of course, endeavour to preserve local identities?—Yes, and I think that is easily done.

1617. Large cities you would still keep as one constituency?—As far as possible, yes, and I think it would be an advantage. I think people feel as citizens. It seems to me a pity to split up a city unnecessarily.

1618. Taking the Metropolis, would you divide that into boroughs?—I am not prepared to say. I think London ought to be divided into four or five constituencies.

1619. Returning ten or a dozen members apiece?—I should always have an odd number of members. I think the people would not like it if you had an even number of members, to think that the majority really had not a majority in the House. I think, therefore, that you ought to have three, five, seven, nine or eleven members.

1620. So that there would be a majority in each constituency?—Yes, and it would have a majority in the House.

1621. Do you consider that under this scheme there would be any fear of the Government of the day not being able to obtain an effective majority?—I think if the electors throughout the country are evenly divided, it is well they should be equally represented, and I do not think any practical difficulty would occur. Supposing, as a matter of fact, you had equality in the House, surely what would happen would be that there would be a fresh formation of parties, that is to say, some on one side would tend towards the other side, and you would have something like coalition. But as a matter of fact, it seems to me that we very seldom in this country have a state of equilibrium.

1622. But supposing there was proportional representation?—We should not then, because we should not have it in the country. We have not got it in the country, and we should not have it in the House. If

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[Continued.]

we had it in the country momentarily, it would very soon vary again, either because the House was not doing enough or because it was doing too much.

1623. I understand the figures put forward by the Proportional Representation Society tend to show that the majority is always in excess of what it ought to be?—Yes.

1624. Therefore, the majority ought to be less?—Certainly less, but variable.

1625. You do not think that would be in practice a real difficulty?—I do not.

1626. One of the advantages you state is that you think a greater interest in elections would be taken?—I do.

1627. By the individual elector?—Yes.

1628. You do not think he would tend to become a mere part of the machine?—No, far less so. I think the power of the machine over him now is too great. Under the present system it is able to say to him: "Unless you do what we tell you, you jeopardise the interests of your party."

1629. You do not think, having a long list of candidates, the elector would take the list which his party manager puts before him?—I think some would, but I think a growing number would not, because I think you would have a growing intelligence in the community, and they could give their votes as they chose without damaging their party. That is the great thing. I do not think we ought to legislate for the least intelligent portion of the community. I think we should go a little above even the mean.

1630. But in practice it has been shown that under the cumulative vote a great majority of electors did that?—I think the cumulative vote was a great mistake. It did not trust the elector, but put an enormous power in the hands of the machine; in fact it made the machine absolutely necessary.

1631. You do not think that system is in the least comparable with proportional representation?—I do not compare them. The cumulative vote seemed to me to be even worse than the single-member constituency; it took more of the initiative out of the hands of the elector, whereas this gives a greater power to the elector. In the School Board Elections, for instance, it became the practice, I believe, even for the machine to portion out certain churches, asking one church to vote for one candidate and another for another—in fact, the electors were like pawns in the hands of the machine.

1632. In fact, the disadvantages were so great that that it was practically universally condemned?—I do not wonder at it.

1633. You say in your memorandum that one of the chief objections made to proportional representation is "that it would give an undue advantage to cliques and sections, and would lead to the formation of groups in the House." You do not anticipate that that would be the result?—I do not. As I have stated, as far as peculiarities on one particular point are concerned, a man who holds such views does not necessarily separate himself from his party, and he is in no trouble to his party leaders; but when you come to the formation of groups, for instance, the Labour Party—and I do not know whether you would call it a group still—in a case of that sort, the single-member constituency does not prevent it, and did not prevent it. The proportional representation system could do no more than give it its due weight.

1634. Under our existing system, surely every important section of the community is represented in the House. There is hardly a body you can mention that has not got its representative?—No, perhaps not.

1635. Even organised societies, such as the teachers, have their representatives?—Yes, who are, nevertheless, party men.

1636. And party men besides?—Yes.

1637. So it cannot be said that under the present system there is that want of representation?—There may not be proportional representation. That I am not prepared to say, nor am I prepared to say that there is any view which ought to be represented that is not represented.

1638. And there are a certain number of independent men in this Parliament, as there always have been?—Yes.

1639. Do you think it desirable that that class of man should be encouraged?—Yes, I certainly do. I think the more independence of thought we have in the House of Commons the better; nor do I think in the long run that it would militate against party organisation, because common sense favours party organisation.

1640. Another objection which you say has been urged against it is the question of expense?—Yes.

1641. Is that an important objection, do you think?—Of course the larger the constituency, one would say, the greater the expense, but I do think with a greater interest on the part of the electorate a candidate might really spend less than he does now even over a larger constituency; that is to say, he will have a larger constituency and a greater variety to appeal to, and he will not need necessarily to win over the apathetic or indifferent people or people who do not quite agree with him—and it is in attempting to do this that the money goes.

1642. The wobblers, the people of undecided views, who have to be attracted?—Yes, who must be urged to vote by placards on the hoardings and by frequent canvassing, and by any and every means. They might be neglected by some candidates, or comparatively neglected, and yet such candidates might succeed.

1643. You have dealt with the question of constituencies being too large to work. As to practical difficulties in the way, as far as the actual counting is concerned, do you think that difficulty can be got over?—Yes.

1644. It is a great deal more complicated necessarily?—Yes, I know the method, and I think there is no difficulty whatever to people skilled in counting.

1645. But you would have to find the skilled men all over the country?—That is very easily done.

1646. You think they would be forthcoming?—Yes, the operation is really simple, though it sounds complicated in a Bill.

1647. You think the intelligence of the electors would enable them to understand the system?—To understand their part, or understand the counting?

1648. To understand their part?—They could understand their part, certainly.

1649. You do not think that would be difficult?—I do not think so.

1650. Putting 1, 2, 3, or 4 is more complicated than putting a simple X?—It may be a little more complicated, but I should expect a very small percentage of the electors would not understand it.

1651. You would not anticipate many spoiled papers?—No.

1652. Would you like this scheme to be begun in a tentative manner experimentally, supposing the country was not considered ripe for a big change?—I should like it to be begun in any way.

1653. Would you extend it to other elections besides parliamentary elections?—I think parliamentary elections would be the best test, because they are the elections that excite the greatest interest.

1654. Have you compared this proportional representation system with other systems, such as the Belgian system?—I know very little about the Belgian system, but I do not like it because it does not do what I wish to see done, that is, it does not put power into the hands of the electors. It does not give sufficient power to the elector. As I understand the Belgian scheme, an elector cannot vote for a name out of one list and one out of another; he must confine himself to one list.

1655. Did you read the evidence which was given by M. Flandin a fortnight ago here?—No.

1656. His scheme is a modification of that which does away with that difficulty and gives a combination of your proposed scheme and the Belgian system. Do you think that would be worth trying?—But could it be very much simpler than the 1, 2, 3, and 4?

1657. Your scheme is an extension. I should say, of the alternative vote?—I think that is preferable to the second ballot, but, of course, it has not the advantages of the single transferable vote.

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[Continued.]

1658. Would you prefer to see the alternative vote tried rather than nothing at all?—Yes, rather than nothing at all. I think it might familiarise people with the method of voting, but it has not the essential merits of the other system.

1659. One objection which has been urged frequently is that under this proportional representation scheme there is no method of testing a by-election, and to have a by-election in a large area is so difficult?—Of course, it is a weakness. The only way I see is that you might make it a single-member constituency for the time being for that by-election.

1660. Which might be a very costly and very difficult matter?—Yes, if thoroughly fought, it might be costly.

1661. But you would not suggest any scheme of co-option, or supplementary candidates?—I would not. I do not think the people would like to see somebody sitting in the House who had not been elected at the time.

1662. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) How do you think the proportional representation system would work in practice if applied in England? How would the lists be framed, and by whom?—I think they would probably be framed by parties—by the machines.

1663. Speaking from memory, I think it was said in a book written 40 or 50 years ago, that the question most present in the mind of an ordinary elector was not "Do I wish to vote for A or B?" but "Do I wish to vote for or against the present Government?" I suppose that is true still?—I think you cannot treat electors as a whole. You have all sorts amongst the electors, and a good many would vote in that way, but I would like to provide also for those who would exercise an independent judgment.

1664. You think the proportional representation system would give a better chance to this class?—I certainly do.

1665. Take the intelligent elector, do not you think the most important question to him is, "Shall the present Government remain or go?"—Yes. I think that is the most important question before him; but supposing he means "Yes," he may give different votes under proportional representation, according to the people who are before him.

1666. Will not he be told how to vote?—Yes, he will be told; but he will not obey.

1667. Would not he, in the majority of cases, obey?—I think in most cases he would; but if in some cases he does not, so much to the good.

1668. I am still talking of the intelligent voter, who thinks the most important question is whether the present Government should stay or go out?—Yes.

1669. Would not his tendency be to adopt the suggestions of the machine, that voting in a particular way would have one effect or the other?—Yes, if the machine was able to say to him that the result depended on his choosing A rather than B; but they cannot say that to him.

1670. Would not they say, "If you want to keep the present Government in, vote for that list"?—Then he would say "Why?"

1671. Would he?—I think so, if he was an intelligent elector.

1672. Anyhow, you think the machine would have a great deal to say in the preparation of the lists if the proportional representation system were adopted?—Yes, I think it would.

1673. The ordinary tendency would be even for the intelligent elector to vote in accordance with the suggestions of the party organisation?—I should not go as far as that.

1674. (Mr. Edwin S. Montagu.) I do not know anything about the Harrow division. Is it a rural constituency at all?—Yes, half of it is rural and half of it is town.

1675. Then you are aware of the extreme difficulties of transit and the like which prevent even an intelligent elector in certain rural constituencies from going any large distance?—Yes.

1676. Do not you think therefore that the making of rural constituencies any larger would make it difficult for the electors to obtain political education?—Of

course, the larger the area that you have, if you had a very sparsely populated area, undoubtedly the more difficult it would be for them even to see their candidates.

1677. Therefore, do you consider the proportional system of representation, with its numerous members and its larger areas, is equally applicable to rural constituencies as to cities?—I would not say equally applicable. I think you might have areas so large that to apply a proportional number of members to it would introduce practical difficulties.

1678. That possibly would be one of the reasons why you suggest that you would be prepared to see it tried first experimentally in cities?—What I said was that I should be glad to see it tried anywhere. I think with these very large constituencies, where a man could not familiarise himself with every hamlet, the Press would play a larger part, and printing would play a larger part. What I would chiefly rely upon, I confess, is increased interest by the electors themselves.

1679. An increased interest, because you think that the candidate whom they would have the opportunity of voting for would be more in accord with their particular political opinions?—Certainly.

1680. Do not you think the candidates are chosen by the party organisations now because they will be likely to commend themselves to the electorate?—But one machine has to choose a man who will cover the whole of its party.

1681. Quite so, but will not the party machine under the proportional representation system have to choose three or four men who will cover the whole of their party?—Yes, three or four men.

1682. Equally of the party stamp?—In my judgment, they would be wise not to choose men all exactly alike.

1683. You suggest that the party organisation would then choose men differing in the stability of their loyalty to the party machine?—Not at all differing in their stability to their party, but differing in their own shades of thought.

1684. Differing, therefore, in the degree to which they approach the condition of independence?—Not differing in the point of loyalty to their party, but differing on some particular subject which does not imply loyalty or disloyalty.

1685. If that be the case, there would still be no room therefore for the increase in the number of independent members returned?—I think there would be plenty of room for independent members, but to an extent these men are themselves adopted by the machine; at any rate, they would have a variety of view even if they are not more independent of the party.

1686. Therefore, you do not put forward this scheme as weakening in any way the managers of the party?—That is not the object of it. I do not know that that would not be somewhat the effect of it. If a man goes to the House of Commons with independent views, I daresay he is a more difficult man for the party people to deal with, but in the long run I do not think that that independence is going to militate against stability of Government, because the members holding these independent views will recognise that they have a substantial interest in maintaining one of the two parties.

1687. I believe you are of opinion that a man of independent views who is likely to prove difficult to party management would not obtain a position on the party list even under proportional representation?—That would prejudice him in his constituency.

1688. And he would not, therefore, be likely to gain election?—That depends. It is a question of degree of likelihood; he might have some striking qualities, but, speaking generally, I should say it would be against him rather than for him that he did not attach himself to any party.

1689. It is possible for an independent member to get into the House of Commons as it exists at present?—We have seen them there.

1690. Do you believe there would be many more of them, or do you anticipate an increase?—I do not know.

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1691. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Do you think they go in as "independents" or become "independents" after they are there?—Some have gone in as "independents."

1692. (*Lord Lochae.*) You say in your Memorandum that under proportional representation there would be an increase of heckling?—I meant by that that I thought the electors would take the matter more into their own hands, and they would be the people looking after the candidates rather than the candidates looking after the electors, and, therefore, would come to heckle the candidates in order to discriminate between them.

1693. You are thinking of England only in regard to that?—Yes, I was thinking of England.

1694. (*Chairman.*) Are there any other recommendations besides the question of proportional represen-

tation which you would like to make with reference to elections to the House of Commons—such as all elections being held on one day, for instance?—I am certainly in favour of that, and also payment of official expenses.

1695. I do not know that these questions come quite within our reference; it is rather doubtful. The question of elections on one day I think is involved, because it would be necessary under a scheme of proportional representation?—Would it?

1696. You would have large areas, and the objections urged against having the elections on one day would be equally valid against having an election for a seven-member constituency on one day?—I think it would be wise to have them on one day.

The witness withdrew.

TWELFTH DAY.

Thursday, 10th June 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.

Sir COURTENAY LEBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D., D.C.L.

The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Mr. JOHN BORASTON called and examined.

Memorandum handed in by the Witness.

No practical system of electoral reform can secure a representation of the people which would be scientifically accurate and complete.

I am opposed primarily to proportional representation as advocated by the Proportional Representation Society, because—

- (1) It appears to be based upon the assumption that the vote is the complete expression of the reasoned will of the people.
- (2) It assumes that small minorities ought to be directly represented in Parliament.
- (3) It assumes that the political object of the minority vote will endure for the Parliament to which the minority representative is elected; or, in the event of the disappearance of that object from the field of practical politics, it leaves the minority representative in the position of a political free lance.
- (4) Judging by the speeches and writings of some of its advocates, it appears to attach more weight to the independence of the Member of Parliament than to the due representation of the wishes of the people, e.g., "Candidates ought to be allowed to maintain their self-respect and independent position, and not be forced to be the slaves or servants of some particular party in the constituency which they sought to represent." (C. A. Cripps, K.C., Caxton Hall, 10th April 1908.)

This claim for independence is absolutely inconsistent with the argument that all minorities ought to be represented.

- (5) Many other of the arguments used by the advocates of proportional representation are also mutually destructive, e.g. :—

(a) Some say it would not tend to increase the importance of groups, but "will develop and encourage the proper use and understanding of a party system (J. Fischer Williams, in "Representation," February 1909), whilst others admit that it would encourage the

formation of groups (Lord Courtney, before the Royal Commission).

(b) Some say the present system places power in the hands of "bosses" ("Representation," April 1909, p. 31), and that proportional representation would "not lend itself to the party caucus" (Lord Courtney, before the Royal Commission), and would lead to "the spontaneous associations of voters securing a member to themselves" (Lord Courtney, "Representation," April 1909, p. 33).

On the other hand, the leaflet, "The Single Transferable Vote. An Explanation," issued in December 1908, by the Proportional Representation Society, admits that the process of voting would be made easy to the elector, because "in practice the party agents would be sure to issue voting cards directing their supporters how to vote."

(c) Although the very object of the existence of their society is to secure the representation of small and relatively unimportant minorities, yet one of their most influential supporters, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, said at the Caxton Hall, on April 10th, 1908, that under a system of proportional representation "individual members would feel a healthier freedom and be more able to resist the influence of small minorities of their constituents."

I am also opposed to proportional representation because, in my opinion, it is unnecessary and undesirable.

It is unnecessary, because—

Experience tends to show that the existing system, if brought up to date by an equitable scheme of redistribution, would serve to give effect to the will of the people with substantial accuracy. The tendency to exaggeration of the representation of the majority in relation

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[Continued.]

to the actual voting, to which the critics of the present system call attention, is, in practice, an advantage, because it makes for strong government.

Further, under the existing system minorities receive a reasonable amount of representation, either directly or indirectly. A member represents not merely those who actually voted for him, whose exact identity must, under the ballot, always remain unknown, but the whole of the constituency by which he is returned. More than this, he is in a fiduciary capacity to the whole Empire. If he is sane, he never ignores the articulate voice of any minority, however small, because he knows that a minority may develop into a majority, and that if he is to hold his seat he must deal fairly with all his constituents.

It is undesirable—

1. On general grounds.
2. On practical grounds.

On general grounds, because—

(1) It is extraordinarily complex in its working and is not likely to win the confidence of the uneducated elector.

(2) It would revolutionise the present system of party government by tending to the increase of groups. In this way administration would become less stable; legislation would become more and more a matter of compromise and of the sacrifice of principle to expediency; continuity of policy generally would disappear, and foreign policy in particular would lose force and directness to a dangerous extent.

(3) It would widen the field for intrigue in Parliament and lower the tone of politics generally.

(4) It would unduly magnify the importance of the minority representative, placing, in many instances, the casting vote in his hands.

(5) It is incapable of application in a completely logical form, and, under the system advocated by the Proportional Representation Society, might conceivably fail, owing to the equal distribution of the minority, to secure any representation for it.

On practical grounds, because—

(1) It would increase the expenses of candidates very largely prior to and at the time of an election; particularly under such headings as meetings, railway and posting expenses, committee rooms, postages, &c.

(2) It would increase the expenses of the Returning Officer; particularly in relation to the travelling expenses of presiding officers, counting agents and others, and to the collection of the ballot boxes.

(3) It would increase the physical and mental strain upon candidates to an unbearable point, thereby squeezing out the business man and leaving the field to the professional type of politician.

(4) It would involve great delay in ascertaining and declaring the result.

(5) It would increase the risk of error in the count and tend to expensive recounts and petitions.

(6) It would fail, under present conditions of education and political knowledge, to meet the intentions of the promoters, because many papers would be spoilt and only a small percentage of voters would fully exercise their preferences, or, indeed, go beyond the party ticket.

(7) It would increase the power of the "boss."

In conclusion, I beg leave to advocate an electoral system which is the natural development of the Reforms of 1884-5. Its main principles have already been largely applied; they are generally understood by the electorate and have won their confidence. Mathematical principles are all very well for schoolmen, but

the British working man loves above all things a straight fight, with the spoils to the victor. He has no use for a system which requires several sums in proportion to find out who has won. To this day, after 37 years' experience, the labourer has hardly grasped the fact that the ballot is both secret and free from the possibility of unfair dealing. The complexities of proportional representation would either reduce him to a state of chronic distrust resulting in apathy, or would deliver him as a helpless victim, into the hands of the party manager.

The system I advocate requires—

- (1) Single member constituencies.
- (2) The single vote.
- (3) Equal electoral areas.
- (4) An alternative vote in cases where there are more than two candidates. This would only be partially utilised, but, on the whole, it would be preferable to a second ballot.

1697. (*Chairman.*) You are the Secretary of the Liberal Unionist Association?—I am.

1698. In your official capacity you have had the conduct of a great many elections?—I have had to do with them more or less directly. My first election agency was in 1874. Since then I have always been actively engaged in political work. My connection with the headquarters of the Liberal Unionist party, first as assistant secretary, then as secretary, dates from February 1887, and has afforded me direct personal experience in all parts of the United Kingdom.

1699. In the memorandum which you have circulated you first of all state that "no practicable system of electoral reform can secure a representation of the people which would be scientifically accurate and complete."—That is rather obvious, I think.

1700. Do you consider that the present system is not in every sense satisfactory?—The present system is not in every sense satisfactory as applied, but I think that many of the difficulties—those difficulties which are particularly urged by advocates of proportional representation—would be removed by an equitable system of redistribution. I find that the points on which speakers dwelt largely at the Caxton Hall meeting were the fact that there were such great discrepancies in the sizes of constituencies, and the other fact that in some cases, owing to there being three or more candidates for one seat, the representative of the minority was sometimes elected. I think those were the main arguments of many of the gentlemen. Mr. Robertson, M.P., said, in a letter which was read at the meeting: "The chief moving force has been the general discontent occasioned by the return of candidates by minority votes in three-cornered contests." Mr. Roberts, M.P., in seconding the resolution, said: "Great disparities were to be found; some Members representing 2,000 votes, whilst others represented ten or twelve times that number." Those are evils, but it is perfectly clear that proportional representation is not the only cure for evils of that kind. Lord Balfour of Burleigh, in moving the resolution, referred to "the great inequalities in the sizes of constituencies." These are the evils on which the advocates of proportional representation always dwell very largely.

1701. In your opinion, they could be met equally well by a general scheme of redistribution?—Undoubtedly those difficulties could.

1702. Following the lines of your memorandum, will you first of all take the question of proportional representation as an alternative to the existing system? I understand you urge several objections to it?—Yes. My objections are generally that proportional representation is neither necessary, desirable, nor practicable. That is briefly my feeling about it.

1703. The advocates of the system desire that Parliament should be an actual reflex of the country?—Yes; but it would not necessarily be so under that system.

1704. First of all you state: "It appears to be based upon the assumption that the vote is the

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[Continued.]

"complete expression of the reasoned will of the "people"?—Yes. It is obvious to all of us who have had any practical experience that electors vote for all kinds of reasons other than political conviction. They vote in many cases because they are under the influence of their fellows or their unions, or some dominant personality—all kinds of reasons other than politics. I had an interesting instance of that the other day in the case of the Hawick by-election. There Mr. Mackinder, who is a very convincing speaker, had admirable meetings, and he and his friends were rather flattered by the manner in which his arguments were received. No doubt he did carry conviction to his hearers, but the result at the poll was not very different from the result on other occasions. A large employer of labour, whom I know, told me what he heard pass between two of his workmen the day after the poll. One said to the other, "It was a great victory yesterday." The other replied, "But I thought you voted for Mr. Mackinder." "Oh, no," was the reply, "Mr. Mackinder is a grand man, and speaks fine"—or something of that kind—"but my father was a Liberal; I have always voted Liberal and was not going to vote for a d—d Tory." That is the sort of thing. It is not a bit political conviction; it is either habit or loyalty to tradition, or emotion, or subjection to somebody else's influence—all sorts of things except political conviction. Therefore I do not personally attach so much importance to an exact scientific reflection of the vote of the people; it is not necessarily the will of the people.

1705. Do you consider that small minorities do obtain sufficient representation in the House of Commons under the present system?—Yes, I think they do. I think most members have a conscientious desire to discharge their duty to all classes of the electorate. As to the small minorities, which possibly might under a system of proportional representation secure representation, I do not think the value of Parliament would be greatly increased by their inclusion. Moreover, proportional representation might fail to obtain the result it seeks. It is conceivable that if we take the case of a constituency with three members, proportional representation might fail where the present system might succeed in bringing in a minority representative. I have no doubt you have had these ideas and arguments presented to you before. Opinion is in a sense gregarious. You find, if you have a minority vote in a constituency, it is probably concentrated in some particular place, it may be in connection with some industry or some union. It might very well happen that the minority in a three-member constituency would fail to reach the quota; whereas, if that constituency were broken up into three different constituencies, by the grouping of the minority, they would return a representative in one of them. But proportional representation does not, in the form at present advocated, seem to me to cure the evil, admitting there is an evil.

1706. You do not consider it an evil in localities such as Wales, for instance, where no Conservative or Unionist obtains representation, or in Birmingham, where no Liberal obtains representation?—I saw the other day that Mr. Winston Churchill in receiving a deputation from Manchester referred to that Birmingham difficulty, and that interview was the occasion for Mr. Humphreys, the Secretary of the Proportional Representation Society, to write a letter to the *Spectator* calling attention to it as a more or less convincing argument in support of his case. Merely as a matter of curiosity, I looked into the figures. It is perfectly true that a considerable body of Liberal and Labour vote in Birmingham is not represented; it is also a fact that the Unionist vote in Manchester fails to find representation; but if you apply the principles of proportional representation in both those cities, you find that the aggregate result is precisely the same as now. To-day there are in Birmingham seven Unionists and no other representatives. In Manchester there are four Radicals and two Labour representatives. If you applied proportional representation in each of those cases, the result would be that in Birmingham there would be five Unionist members, one Radical and one Labour; and in

Manchester there would be two Unionist members, three Radicals and one Labour. The defect is thus cured very largely, and I think if you applied universally the same principle, the law of averages would come in. With proportional representation, the aggregate representation of Birmingham and Manchester would be precisely as it is to-day.

1707. You do not attach much importance to the fact that in particular localities the minority does not obtain representation?—No, because if it is a considerable minority, it has its chance of obtaining representation sooner or later. I should allow it to be content to carry on its missionary work. If it is a minority which is likely to grow and which possesses real vitality, it will be represented somewhere else in the country, and it has there to find its outlet. In other cases let them apply their efforts through the agency of the Press or through the medium of a magazine and by preaching and advocacy. I do not think there is a hardship in those cases.

1708. In the fourth paragraph of your memorandum you refer to the argument brought forward as to the independence of a Member of Parliament. Do you consider that the independence under the present system is sufficient?—I think it is, usually. There are times of great political importance when crises arise, when I think in the interests of the whole country any man should be willing to sink his independent opinion if he can do it without serious sacrifice of principle. I do not quite understand those gentlemen who say in one breath that minorities must be represented and in the next breath that the Member must be independent. I cannot see the logical position.

1709. They attach importance, I imagine, to the fact that it is desirable to have men of independent character in the House of Commons, who, under the present party system, they contend, do not obtain a fair chance of getting in?—I think they get it. Lord Courtney reminded this Commission that he was in the House for 20 years. I have the honour of knowing him, and it was my privilege to be his election agent in 1885. I should characterise him as an exceedingly independent politician. He did not find it particularly difficult to obtain a seat in Parliament. There are many others.

1710. You rather traverse the contention that the tendency of the present system is to restrict that class of men?—I do not think it restricts it in any way. I cannot see that it does. Of course occasions will arise, —we are face to face with one to-day—when it may appear that some hardship is occasioned; but the strongest advocates at the moment of proportional representation are gentlemen who do not find themselves in harmony with the majority of their party. Suppose that Lord Hugh Cecil were returned to Parliament, as he very well might be, more or less by the consent or concurrence of the Radicals, or suppose Mr. Abel Smith, or any one else, were so returned, one of two things would happen; either some measure of tariff reform, regarded as the first constructive policy of the Unionist party, would come before Parliament and succeed or it would come before Parliament and be defeated, but there would be an end of the matter, and then Lord Hugh Cecil would be at perfect liberty to oppose, as he probably would oppose, those whose votes had returned him to Parliament. These occasions seem to me to be rare accidents.

1711. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) A witness who came before us yesterday, Sir William Anson, argued that the tendency of party organisation was to become stricter; that it was much stricter now than it was 20 years ago, and consequently it was more difficult for independent members to get into Parliament. Would that be your view or not? That was one of the arguments for proportional representation?—Broadly, no; because the tendency of party organisation to-day is to become more and more representative and democratic. It may be in the long run that the fact that party organisations know that they have an assured body of public opinion behind them may tend to strengthen their position. That is so. But then the whole object of party organisation to-day is to reflect as accurately as possible what the wishes of the party may be in a constituency. If we reform and

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reconstitute an association, it is always in the direction of democratising it.

1712. You would not therefore think that the chance of a member of independent views getting into Parliament is worse now than it was 20 years ago?—I do not think so for a moment.

1713. (*Chairman.*) In paragraph 5 of your memorandum you refer to the contention of the advocates of proportional representation that it would not tend to increase the importance of groups. In your opinion, you think that proportional representation would have the opposite effect and would encourage groups?—If it succeeded, but I think it very doubtful whether it would succeed. They do not attempt to apply it in a logical way. They are prepared to limit it to three-member constituencies, or perhaps in boroughs to a larger number. They would probably fail altogether.

1714. I understand you are not in favour of a number of groups being in Parliament. You prefer the dual party system to a variety of large or small sections?—Infinitely. Groups in a sense will always exist, and it is to be desired that there should be bodies of men who may be pioneers, or people who are very wisely attempting to prevent rash movements. It is well, however, that they should be within parties, and within parties always, and ready on great occasions to subordinate their individual feelings to what is really the general will. Otherwise, it seems to me that government would become exceedingly difficult.

1715. You think that the proportional representation system would tend to encourage groups and therefore make party government more difficult than at present?—I think it undoubtedly would, if applied in such a way as to meet the desires of its advocates; but, as I say, I do not think it will be so applied if the present claim is conceded. Mr. Westlake, in a letter published last February by their publication "Representation," says that in a three-member constituency proportional representation would not have very much effect: It would not help minorities much or prevent Liberals from excluding Home Rulers or Conservatives from excluding Free Traders; and he goes on to say that with five-member constituencies the important sections—that is, the important minorities—would not be helped much in point of members, but he thinks an arrangement of that kind might stimulate exertions, and perhaps prepare the way for something in the future. The practical schemes to which they limit themselves will therefore fail to secure the objects, good or bad, which they desire. I do not think it is a practical line to take at all.

1716. You say you disapprove of the actual proposals, and you do not think that they are capable of being carried out?—I do not think they are. I do not think they would effect their purpose with a limitation to three or five-member constituencies, and there would be great practical difficulties in the way; and, if you extend it in a logical way, of course it would become more and more difficult and impracticable. The case of Wales, to which you referred, presents a difficulty undoubtedly. The situation in Wales is more or less accidental. It may turn round at a very early period. It is not a racial question or a national question, it is a religious and educational one; and legislation may at an early date very much alter the situation in Wales. I do not see how you can treat Wales as a separate unit. We have to treat it as a part of the whole kingdom. With regard to Ireland I do not think their scheme would modify the representation in any material sense. It certainly would not give a seat to the Unionists in Cork City or County, as, I think, Lord Courtney suggested. In Dublin, undoubtedly, we might get a Unionist. We have had a Unionist there before. We may have one there the next time. It so happens that the man who represents St. Stephen's Green, Mr. Waldron, is an exceedingly popular man and a man who is trusted by the Unionists, who believe he would never actually lend himself to any destructive measure of Home Rule. As regards Belfast, the Nationalists would probably get a seat there. They have a seat there to-day. But it would not affect Ireland generally. If its representation was reduced to its proper average size, the relative position would

be very much the same under a single-member system as it would be if there was grouping.

1717. In section (b) of the same paragraph you refer to the power placed in the hands of the "bosses." Assuming that some such system was brought about, as the Proportional Representation Society recommend, do you consider that the party organiser would have more or less power?—I think he must necessarily become more powerful. I think, with the increase in complexity, there must be a corresponding increase in the authority of the party manager, because the elector will have to look to him more for advice and instruction.

1718. The fact of the election being not so simple would tend to put more power into the hands of the machine?—Undoubtedly—in exact ratio, I should say.

1719. Had you any experience of the School Board elections when the cumulative vote was in force?—I have not had much direct experience of that, I have only a sort of general knowledge of it. Of course, it provided a very anxious problem for the organisers.

1720. The party managers did have great power?—They ran the whole thing, and I think in countries where proportional representation in some form or other is adopted, it is found that the party managers have great authority. If they do not, then the system does not work.

1721. You point out in your memorandum that the Proportional Representation Society is inconsistent. You say that, whereas Lord Courtney's system does "not lend itself to the party caucus," there is a leaflet you refer to which puts it in another way?—It is their own leaflet of instructions. They say that the difficulty in voting, and that kind of thing, would be largely overcome, because in practice the party agents would be there to issue voting cards directing their supporters how to vote. They would undoubtedly. Certainly that indicates that the "boss" is going to have a good deal of authority. I should like to correct that paragraph C. I say there "although the very object of its existence"—that is not the proper way to put it; I should prefer to say "although one of the objects." It is not the only or primary object. The primary object is proportional representation throughout; but one of the objects, or part of that object, is the representation of the smaller minorities.

1722. Now as to the actual reasons why you consider it unnecessary. You consider that if the existing system is brought up to date by an equitable system of redistribution it would meet most of the disadvantages of the present system?—I think so, those which are real.

1723. In the next paragraph you refer to the existing system giving minorities a reasonable representation?—Yes.

1724. In your experience have you ever come across any important sections of the community who have no direct representation in Parliament?—I cannot say that I have, not of any importance.

1725. No society or body of men?—I do not think so, I cannot recall an occasion when there was any movement which was sufficiently important to attract real public attention which ever failed to get representation.

1726. As a matter of practice, most movements have their men in the House who are anxious to promote them?—Quite so; for instance, the Suffragette movement, and, until recently, the Marriage Laws Reform movement.

1727. And anti-vaccination?—Exactly. They could always get representation because opinion is so gregarious. It is gregarious in the small sense as well as in the large. I have occasionally to employ canvassers. I do not see much of them directly, or of their work. Say, you are canvassing for these estimable people known as "Liberal Unionists," if you go down a street and find one Liberal Unionist you are almost certain to find a considerable number. You may go down several streets without finding one at all; but, if you find one, you find he has companions almost always in the same neighbourhood, owing I suppose to communication and interchange of ideas.

1728. Localities have their distinct political complexions?—Yes.

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1729. As to the objections on general grounds, you state you consider the scheme is "extraordinarily complex in its working and is not likely to win the confidence of the uneducated elector" ?—Yes.

1730. Would you go so far as to say that it is impracticable, that it is so difficult that the ordinary elector would not understand it?—I think I would go so far as to say that. He certainly would not understand it. He might possibly, under suitable instruction of the agent, succeed to a limited extent in giving effect to it, but in large constituencies I should want a great deal of information, which I do not at present possess, to induce me to believe that the electors will exercise their later preferences. I do not think anything will make them do it.

1731. You have no doubt seen the results published by the Society with reference to their trial elections?—Yes.

1732. Where they claim that there have been very few spoilt papers. Would you say that they were representative of an ordinary election?—I think it was an exceedingly interesting experiment. I should be very much surprised if it resulted in any other way. They appealed to a class of people different to the ordinary elector. We have to deal with them as a whole. They appealed to the more intelligent electors who take in the daily papers and who are in the habit of reading those papers. But they did something more, though I do not know to what extent. I think the great majority of the voting papers went through the press, but they also issued batches of voting papers to their friends, and it is beyond doubt that a large number of those voting papers were filled up by those persons. The thing is so simple. I might have had a number of voting papers, and I should have filled them in in a perfectly *bonâ fide* sense with a view to working out the system, because the whole thing was experimental.

1733. Have you any experience of the Continental systems in countries where it has been in force, or where similar methods have been in force?—I have no experience or knowledge save what I have gained from a perusal of various publications. I am a busy man, and am not able to make a study of it; but I have read the publications of the Society, and therefore have a general knowledge.

1734. I think we may assume that it has been fairly successful in Belgium?—Yes; but then that is hardly comparable. I do not see how you can compare that system with the transferable vote, and in Finland the system is wholly distinct again, and very much simpler, it seems to me. There, again, you have no local prejudice to overcome; you are starting with a clean slate entirely, and with a new electorate. They had nothing to forget. The electors here have the customs of years to forget.

1735. You anticipate that it would take some time before the electors would really become as proficient in voting as they are at present?—I do not think they would ever do it. You find that every candidate issues bills in these days of simple elections all over his constituency telling the electors that the ballot is secret, and that they must vote in a particular way. He sends also to every elector a card instructing him how he ought vote. In spite of that, I do not think the percentage of spoilt papers diminishes very much. That is where you have to instruct a man how to vote for one out of two persons, but if you are instructing him how to exercise preferences for 15, 20 or more persons, the thing is hopeless.

1736. As a matter of fact, the number of spoilt papers has become latterly quite small?—It is not large, but it is considerable. I do not think there is any very great diminution in the number, but the task presented to the elector is most simple, to put his X in a particular place. He has seen it before him on the walls, and with the card in his hand can hardly fail to do it if he has eyes and ability to make a mark; but the other is a very different process.

1737. Your second objection you have dealt with, it refers to formation of groups?—Yes.

1738. Your third objection is that you say it would widen the field for intrigue in Parliament, and also lower

the tone of politics generally. Do you hold that view strongly?—Yes. Of course, I am assuming that it became successful, and did lead to the representation of these small minorities. Obviously, it would be necessary for whips to get into touch with all these various groups to make sure what they are going to do, and it seems to me it would present infinitely greater difficulties than we have to-day, and it would set an unfair value on their votes in the House. I think I have indicated in my memorandum that it would have a tendency to give an important casting vote to possibly a small minority, and it is a temptation to a small minority.

1739. Who are not allied to either of the big parties?—Yes, or not closely allied, and not necessarily under subjection to the party whips.

1740. As far as the candidate is concerned, he would not have to bid for the vote of the minority in his constituency, would he?—Under proportional representation I assume he would be anxious to get as many votes as he possibly could. I think so. I do not see that it would make any difference in that respect. It would be as important for him to get votes or first preferences. There would be a considerable scramble, I should think, for first preferences to place the position beyond doubt.

1741. You do not think it would lessen the influence which an organised small group now undoubtedly has on candidates?—No, I do not think it would. There again we have to look at what might possibly happen. Supposing you had, in one of the larger constituencies in a borough, a party endeavouring to run right up to the limit of the possibility of success, or even over the limit, there would be great anxiety and great effort to secure the votes of those who might otherwise constitute a minority.

1742. In the fifth paragraph of your memorandum you say proportional representation is incapable of application in a completely logical form?—The only logical form is really the National form.

1743. (Sir Charles Eliot.) Mr. Hare's system?—Yes.

1744. (Chairman.) That is obviously impracticable?—Absolutely, and I should say it is impracticable in any really large sense for geographical reasons, conditions of distance, and all that kind of thing, and, moreover, you would be destroying local sentiment which I personally attach great importance to—it is the mother of patriotism.

1745. Do you think it would be a calamity to destroy the identity of, say, two-member constituencies—places like Norwich, for instance, and Portsmouth?—I have a great hatred of two-member constituencies.

1746. How would you deal with two-member constituencies?—I would divide them just as the others are divided. In some cases, of course, where the increase of population has been large and where population has spread to adjoining districts, it might be necessary to increase the number of Members.

1747. You might increase the constituency?—Yes, either diminish or increase it if necessary. The two-member constituency is bad on all grounds.

1748. I do not think it has any supporters anywhere?—I should think not. It certainly is not popular among party managers. It is troublesome to get people to run in double harness as it were.

1749. Would such constituencies like the retention of two members, or would there be any hostility to it?—I think in most cases they would rejoice to find the system altered, because there are always troubles. I should think to-day Southampton and Portsmouth would be exceedingly glad to have it changed.

1750. On practical grounds, you say proportional representation would increase the expense of candidates?—Yes.

1751. In what way? Although the area would be larger the expenses surely would be divided amongst more candidates?—That is true, but there are certain expenses which would not divide up in that way. People to-day are not content, as they were before the last Reform Act, with a minimum of attention from candidates, and a certain standard has been set up which would inevitably have to be maintained; at least, there would be energetic people who would maintain

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it and set the pace for the others. The candidate, instead of covering a certain constituency of comparatively small area, would have to cover a large area. If it was in a remote part of the country, where the population is scattered, the difficulty would be still greater, but it would be great anywhere. He would have enormously increased expense in moving about from place to place.

1752. Under the present system do not you exact the maximum out of your candidates?—No, I think not.

1753. It seems to me that a candidate cannot do much more than he does at present?—The candidate could make a business of it and devote himself wholly to it. We have to-day—and a source of strength in the House, too—a great many business men who continue to carry on business—merchants, manufacturers, engineers and lawyers—and they certainly could not attempt to enter the House under conditions such as would take place with enlarged constituencies.

1754. You do not think that the fact that the constituency is made so much larger would make it obviously impossible for any individual to cover the whole of it?—It might in some cases, but not in others. He would have to cover it. He would not perhaps be able to cover it in the way he does to-day. To-day he goes to every village practically. He would then have to confine himself to certain centres, and he would be less known. There would be the same struggle naturally between men to get ahead of each other, and the struggle would be made under much more serious conditions both of expense and physical strain than it is to-day.

1755. You do not think the practice would arise of the various candidates who belonged to one party dividing the constituency into compartments?—I do not think the practice would arise of taking it in sections. You have to suppose, in the first instance, that they are in perfect agreement and content to take their chance of how they will come out in the matter of preference. I think you would have the usual sort of struggle, each one wanting to make himself absolutely safe.

1756. Your second objection is to the Returning Officers' expenses?—Yes.

1757. There, instead of having seven elections and seven counts, you would only have one, although a much larger one. You do not think that would equalise it?—No, I do not see how it could equalise it. You have now a centre to which a certain number of ballot boxes have to go. If you enlarge the area, you have still a centre and they all have to go that distance, and I think you will find it will make a great increase. The larger the area, of course, the greater would be the distance.

1758. Do you think that would not be compensated for by the fact that, instead of requiring seven centres, you would only have the one?—No, I do not think it would. It would make no difference to the matter of ordinary polling station expenses, and things of that kind. You would have precisely the same number of journeys, and long journeys instead of short journeys.*

* In further explanation of these answers the witness subsequently sent in the following note:—

The certain increase in expense is easily demonstrated. Take the possible case of three contiguous single-member county divisions, each with three polling stations situated at an average distance of seven miles from the respective places of election. Combine them in one three-member constituency, and you have 90 polling stations, each situated at an average distance of possibly 21 miles from the place of election. Therefore you would have to bring each of the 90 ballot boxes with the attendant officials an average distance of 21 miles, instead of an average distance of seven miles. It is conceivable this might even more than treble the expense, because in many county districts railway facilities, if existent, are not available after the close of the polling, and it would more frequently be impossible to reach the place of election with the boxes from the remote polling stations until the next day. This would mean larger fees and probably subsistence allowances to the officers. Prolonged delays in the delivery of the boxes to the returning officer are objectionable on more than one ground. They would increase the possibility of accident, and they would tend to develop a sense of doubt and uneasiness when feeling ran high and parties were evenly divided.

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1759. No. 3 we have dealt with. In No. 4 you say: "It would involve great delay in ascertaining and declaring the result." Is that a serious matter?—I do not think it is a very serious matter, but, as we know people are exceedingly impatient in these days. I should be content to wait an hour or two more myself.

1760. In No. 5 you say you think the risk of error would be increased?—Undoubtedly, the more complicated the system. Mistakes are always taking place now when it is a matter of a simple count.

1761. In No. 6 you say you think many papers would be spoiled?—I think many papers would be spoiled, but I think the great failure of the system would be in the fact that so few people comparatively would completely exercise their preferences.

1762. I think we may take it that the single transferable vote finds very little favour in your view?—Yes.

1763. Are there any other schemes which have been suggested which you would think advisable of adoption?—With regard to the alternative vote?

1764. Yes, the alternative vote, where more than two candidates stand?—Yes, I think something of that kind necessary. The second ballot looks all very well, but, I think, there we should find ourselves face to face with great practical difficulties. There would be the great additional expense. The difficulty would be to maintain the interest to bring men up to the poll on a second occasion. I think you would get greater carelessness.

1765. The alternative vote would combine with a single polling?—Yes. On the whole, there is no perfect way that I can see of getting over the difficulty; but that is the most equitable way of doing it or attempting to do it.

1766. Have you seen the two Bills that are before Parliament now?—Yes.

1767. Have you read those Bills?—I have glanced through them. Both would do away with the two-member constituencies.

1768. Two-member constituencies are fatal to either of those two Bills?—Yes; I think the alternative vote might be valuable. It would remove the sense of injustice and unfairness which properly arises where, in a three-cornered election, the representative of a minority gets in.

1769. But even then it does not necessarily follow that the man who gets in commands the majority?—No. Who shall say, for instance, to-day what will happen if a Labour candidate is running? Ten years ago, if a Labour man was running, he probably took his votes mainly from Liberal ranks. To-day, in some places, he would take votes more largely from the Unionist ranks than from Liberal. I should say there are places in Lancashire where that would occur. It is a difficult matter really.

1770. I take it your recommendation would be to abolish two-member constituencies in any case?—Yes.

1771. And retain the single-member constituencies?—Yes, with equality of voters.

1772. And equality of areas?—Yes, that means equality of electorate.

1773. Do you think the constituency ought to be decided by the number of electors or population?—There is something to be said for both; but on the whole I should say by the number of electors. The number of electors is ascertained at short periods. You have your new Register every year and know exactly where you are, and you do not know the population.

Something like the conditions I have endeavoured to describe would happen in the county of Cornwall, which has already been used as an illustration in this Inquiry. I believe, indeed, the distances would be greater. Moreover, great difficulties and heartburnings would arise in the eastward half with regard to the selection of a place of election which was reasonably central. Many counties, of course, present far greater geographical difficulties than Cornwall. The would-be reformers would either have to find new capitals of counties or sections or groups of counties, or they would materially exceed the scale of distance and expenses, which I have endeavoured to indicate in my illustration.—J. B.

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1774. What was the last redistribution based on—population, was it not?—Yes, roughly, it was based on population, and necessarily, because you got your Bill before you got your registration, if I remember rightly, because you were dealing with a new electorate.

1775. Are there any recommendations you would like to make as regards the conduct of elections?—In what sense?

1776. For instance, as regards the question of the payment of the Returning Officers' expenses, should they be borne by the candidates or the locality, or from Imperial funds?—I think that the Returning Officers' expenses might be borne from public funds. I have not thought out whether by the local authority or by the national authority—whether it should be on rates or taxes. I think one might very well relieve the candidate from them. But I am wholly against the payment of members and the professional politician.

1777. That I do not think comes within our reference?—I think the other thing would be an equitable relief.

1778. There is another question which comes into our reference indirectly, because any scheme of proportional representation must, I think, necessitate the elections being held on one day. Are you in favour of that?—Is it possible? I do not think it is.

1779. You think the practical difficulties are so great, quite apart from whether you consider it desirable or not?—Yes, I should not like to be a Returning Officer in a considerable constituency if we held all the elections on one day. I think it would be enormously difficult.

1780. It is done in France, I understand, and most foreign countries?—Is it done in places where political feeling runs very high, and where there is possibility of some disturbance? There would be difficulties in connection with the Returning Officer's staff, difficulties which would be increased by the system of proportional representation, because you would want so many more trained men; and there would be certainly serious difficulties with regard to the maintenance of order, or there might be. You do not want to have the military called out to keep order at elections,—a thing which is not unknown, I think, in some foreign countries. I do not see how you could possibly police a large area if all the elections were on one day. There are occasions when elections pass off very quietly when public feeling is not running high.

1781. I take it, on practical grounds, you consider it impracticable?—I think it would land us in great difficulties.

1782. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) Have these views which you have expressed to the Commission been discussed at any meeting of Liberal Unionist agents?—No. I have submitted mine to this Commission with many misgivings. They are ideas that occurred to me after perusing the publications of the Proportional Representation Society. I confess, 25 years ago I had leanings myself towards proportional representation. I thought it was a delightful theory. I think to-day it is a very pretty theory.

1783. But would you say, without any such formal opinion, that on the whole the agents of your party are agreed in their opposition to it?—No, I would not say that. I know one or two of them, who, like myself, at one time were under the influence of Lord Courtney. One at least believes in proportional representation, though I have never talked over the thing with him, but, again, I doubt if he has ever thought it out seriously. Twenty-five years ago I remember moving a resolution at a debating society in support of proportional representation, and I was very successful on that occasion, but then I really had not thought it out in a practical sense, and I was living in a constituency which Lord Courtney would say is peculiarly intelligent, one which he represented. I do not lightly differ from him. He is a man for whom I have the greatest possible regard and respect.

1784. Would you say that this is a question in which there is any public interest manifested?—I am afraid there is not much public interest in it. You can never tell how much public interest exists, but I am bound to say that I do not think there is much public

interest manifested. It is not a thing which is talked about or discussed at all outside a certain body of enthusiasts.

1785. (Chairman.) You do not refer to it in your literature?—Not in the slightest degree, and it is never referred to in any of our organisations. We have never had a resolution from any part of the world suggesting that some such system should be adopted. You may say, so far as outward appearances go, there is no interest beyond the society itself.

1786. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) I imagine it is the sort of thing on which feeling would run very high. If such a scheme were brought forward, you would anticipate considerable opposition?—There would be opposition. There is always opposition to the unknown; and this is a case where, I think, opposition would be amply justified. I think there would be doubt and suspicion everywhere.

1787. I do not quite understand the first objection to proportional representation in your memorandum. You say, "It appears to be based on the assumption that the vote is the complete expression of the reasoned will of the people." What the witnesses in support of proportional representation have urged is that it would give more complete expression to the reasoned will of the people by their system. It is quite evident that the existing system does not express the reasoned will of the people. You mean by that that you deny that proportional representation would help to express that will?—No, I rather question the vote being in itself the expression of the reasoned will of the people, as I endeavoured to explain a little earlier. It may be anything but an expression of reasoned will; and, in a great number of cases, is. That is what I mean. Assuming that the vote is necessarily the complete expression of the reasoned will of the people, then there is something more to be said for the desire of the advocates of proportional representation to find complete representation of that in the House of Commons.

1788. But assuming that the vote is not the expression of the reasoned will of the people at present?—Then it is less important to secure proportional representation.

1789. But do not you think it is possible to make the vote approximate to the reasoned will of the people?—I think it does as it is.

1790. You think it does approximate?—It approximates.

1791. Do not you think you could make it approximate further?—I do not think it necessarily would with a system of three, or even five, member seats.

1792. You were suggesting that one of the reasons which influenced the votes of people at the present moment was the strong personality of a particular candidate, apart from political views?—That is often so.

1793. Further on in the evidence that you have given us you said the relations of a candidate to a larger constituency could not possibly be so direct or so intimate as in a smaller constituency?—Yes.

1794. Therefore, the strong personality, as opposed to his political convictions, would have less weight in a larger constituency than in the present single-member constituencies?—Probably that is so.

1795. Therefore, in that case, the voter would have to exercise the vote that he exercises more on political grounds and less on personal grounds?—That is an ideal way of regarding it. He would not know the man so well, and would probably exercise his vote in accordance with the lead of some party organisation or a trade union, or something of that kind, with which he was connected.

1796. But the vote would become more political and less personal?—It would be a less personal vote in that case. Of course you might carry it to a logical conclusion and remove the individual altogether in the case, but I value the individual relationship myself.

1797. You were talking about the cases of Birmingham and Wales, and you gave figures which I did not quite understand. At present I think I am right in saying there are seven Unionist members for Birmingham?—Yes.

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1798. And under the proportional calculation, which I think you made, there would be five Unionists, one Radical, and one Labour member?—That is so.

1799. That is precisely what the proportional representation advocates desire to bring about—the representation of the minority in Birmingham?—Yes.

1800. Your contention was that it did not make any difference if you added Manchester to Birmingham?—Quite so. I say you frequently find a tendency for the law of averages to work out some rough kind of equality in cases of this kind, and, curiously enough, it completely applies to the case instanced by Mr. Winston Churchill and expanded on by Mr. Humphreys. The net aggregate result would be precisely the same as to-day under our present system, the balance on the one side in the one case neutralising the balance on the other side in the other case.

1801. Later on you said a system of proportional representation would both tend to increase the number of groups, and, at the same time, would strengthen the power of the party "boss." I refer to your memorandum, page 4, subsection (2): "It would revolutionise the present system of party government by tending to the increase of groups." And then, on page 6, paragraph 7, you say: "It would increase the power of the 'boss'"?—Yes.

1802. Using the term "boss" as the party manager?—I am quoting the word used by the Proportional Representation Society.

1803. It cannot do both at the same time?—I am not sure. The more complex the thing is, the more necessary it is for the "boss" to instruct; that is to say, for the political manager or organiser, to instruct the electors. I know exactly what is in your mind, but there would be greater necessity for bargaining and for negotiations, and there the "boss" would come in all along the line. I said a little time ago one of my practical objections is that applying it as they at present seek to apply it, it will not secure their end, and clearly there the "boss" will score only.

1804. In other words, there will practically be an unauthorised list system even if you adopt the single transferable vote?—There would always be a list system. There must be. In this country you assume that every elector is as intelligent as those readers of newspapers and others, who were responsible for the filling up of the voting papers in the Caxton Hall experiment.

1805. You have mentioned to us the difficulty of getting two members in a double-barrelled constituency to run together?—Yes.

1806. That difficulty, I imagine, would be increased if there were five instead of two members. It would be very difficult to get five candidates to run together in harness?—But you would never find a case where under proportional representation it would be possible for five members of one party to get in for a constituency, or three.

1807. Even then the difficulty would be increased of getting three candidates to run harmoniously together?—It would be hardly the same thing, because in the two-member constituencies the candidates are joint, and their expenditure is joint, and they are supposed to run jointly. All their meetings are held together, and that kind of thing, and they appear on the same platforms, but personal difficulties arise frequently.

1808. But take a larger constituency?—Then each man would be running independently, obviously.

1809. Even though his name appeared on the party list?—That would be a question of the party grouping. The relationship in the double-barrelled constituency is so intimate that the one agent acts for both. They share their expenses.

1810. Do you imagine that it would be easier to keep alive political interest in a large scattered constituency, where it is argued a candidate could not cover it with the same thoroughness that he does now?—Do you mean if he did not cover it?

1811. Yes?—I should say not.

1812. Do you think it would lead to the greater reading of newspapers and publications?—I should, think on the contrary, it would lead to greater political apathy, because the more you stimulate interest in a

district by holding meetings, and that kind of thing, the more you induce people to go to the newspapers for further and more complete information. I think it would lead to much greater apathy.

1813. About the advantages which you claim for large majorities as the result of an election—a majority which may be disproportionate to the votes obtained—you say: "Continuity of policy generally would disappear and foreign policy in particular would lose force and directness to a dangerous extent." It is not foreign policy for which large majorities are usually used, but for ambitious legislation. Do you think that ambitious legislation is desirable when possibly it might be argued that the majority is an artificial one?—You are rather coupling up two arguments, are you not, if I may say so? The argument there is that the increase in groups would create these difficulties.

1814. Precisely; and therefore the working majority of a government would be smaller?—Yes, it might cease to exist.

1815. It would be more in harmony with the actual expression of the majority at the polls at election time?—The working majority might be a kind of "will-o'-the-wisp" in a case of that sort, it seems to me.

1816. Do you think it is a good thing that the working majority should be far bigger than the real majority as expressed at election time?—Far bigger, is a condition to which I would not necessarily lend myself, but I think there is no harm, and, on the other hand, there is benefit arising from a tendency which does exist for the majorities to be larger than the actual voting majorities throughout.

1817. You are familiar with the political phenomenon which is described as the swing of the pendulum?—I am afraid we are.

1818. Are you of opinion that the swing would be less violent and less frequent with proportional representation, because the majorities would probably be smaller?—It does not necessarily follow that the majorities would be smaller. It would be a question of the union of groups. That is where I think one of the greatest evils of the system comes in, because people would be bidding for the support of those groups, and instead of having compact parties you would have a mass of parties without cohesion, and it would be somebody's business to make some kind of cohesion; there would be all kinds of negotiation and intrigue to get a working majority.

1819. With regard to your own recommendations at the end of your memorandum, I think Lord Balfour of Burleigh told us the other day that in his opinion the dignity of being one of the members for a large city was greater than that of being a member for a portion of a city. That was one of the arguments used against the division of two-member constituencies. Do you think there would be a destruction of local patriotism by dividing, say, Southampton into north and south?—I do not think so in any sense. A member would not be the Member for Birmingham but a Member for Birmingham, whether under a system of one constituency or seven constituencies. He would be a Member for Birmingham although actually returned, say, by Bordesley.

1820. Your second recommendation is "the single vote." Does that mean the abolition of plural voting?—No, not necessarily at all. By that I mean in the same sense as when they speak of a single transferable vote. I mean merely one vote. I have not touched on the other question.

1821. As to equal electoral areas, you would not apply that rigidly as between town and country?—In the sense of the electorate, yes, certainly. I do not see why there should be any distinction. I should arrive as nearly as possible at the proportion.

1822. Would not you find rural interests were therefore very much under represented?—No, I do not think so.

1823. Your fourth suggestion is that possibly in a few cases an alternative vote might be adopted. You object to the single transferable vote very largely because it is a complication of voting?—Yes.

1824. Do not you think that also applies, although possibly not to such a great extent, to the alternative vote?—Undoubtedly. It looks to me as a thing which

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[Continued.]

might be done, and which to an extent is desirable; but, as I think I said, I do not regard it as a perfect solution, because I think a good many people would not avail themselves of it; but, on the whole, I think it preferable to the second ballot, both on the score of expense and because I think the proportion using it would be greater than the proportion of people using the second ballot, the second election for which means a great upset.

1825. Has it occurred to you that both in the transferable vote and the alternative vote, it might be made necessary for a voter to exercise a preference, and that by its omission his vote would not be counted?—Anything is possible legally. It could be done, but the vote is a sort of right of citizenship, and are you going to compel a man to exercise the right and make it penal if he does not?

1826. It is not the suggestion to make it penal, but the suggestion is that if he chooses to exercise his vote, just as now he must make a cross or the vote is not allowed, so he must record the figure 1 and the figure 2?—It is possible to compel him to do that, but he may not wish to give a preference, and I think you are hampering the man's right.

1827. In the same way as he may not wish now to vote?—He may wish very strongly to vote for one man, and not wish to give a possible vote to any other man out of the number of candidates, and I think it precious hard to compel him to, and public opinion would resent it.

1828. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Would you explain a little more fully the part of your memorandum on page 5, where you say the scheme of proportional representation, as advocated by Lord Courtney, "might conceivably fail, owing to the equal distribution of the minority, to secure any representation for it"?—Assuming a three-member constituency where there are, say—going on the large side—36,000 votes recorded, the quota would be 9,001, and it might be very possible for a considerable minority to fail to get the quota; whereas, if you divided that area up into three single-member constituencies, 9,000 votes, or thereabouts, would in all probability secure a member because of the tendency for opinion to be grouped in certain localities. If you divide it over the whole, it does not get its representation.

1829. Then you say that proportional representation might squeeze out a business man and leave the field to the professional type of politician. But it is admitted that under proportional representation the candidate could not be in such close touch with his constituents as now. Is it not likely that a man who had made for himself a name, either as a barrister or merchant, or anything of that kind, and was well known locally, would be accepted?—My argument is that the greatly increased strain would drive out some of the men who are most valuable in the House of Commons to-day. If that greatly increased strain does not occur, then the argument does not apply; but I am afraid it would occur, because I am afraid there would be some people with little else to do who would be exceedingly strenuous and set the pace for the others, and either the others must adopt that pace or drop out of the running altogether.

1830. You say further on that proportional representation will increase the risk of error in the count and tend to expensive recounts and petitions. Could you give a little more detail about that? It seems to me very important to know on what points you think the difficulties might arise?—The counting will necessarily be a longer and more protracted business with many more opportunities for error. Error arises constantly now where you merely have to sort papers and divide them up into two heaps. It is very usual to have recounts—all sorts of little accidents occur.

1831. Does a simple recount give rise to a petition?—No, recounts do not necessarily; but petitions arise where people are dissatisfied with the result of a recount, and they think a scrutiny or something is desirable. Recounts would be more frequent and the risk of demand for a scrutiny might be greater. Men might not be satisfied that the various sums had been worked out accurately. It is astonishing, where you

have a number of people at work in a counting room, how simple little accidents occur, which you can hardly trace without commencing over again. Sometimes you see a bundle of 50 votes transferred to the wrong heap.

1832. You think the number of petitions would be greater under the proposed system than at present?—I think it is probable that there would be a tendency in that direction. There would be more room for doubt.

1833. Have you given any attention to the system which is called proportionate representation, the system which prevails in some parts of France, where there is one member elected for a certain number of thousands of the population? Would you propose to follow any such rule as that in a redistribution scheme?—I assume that the broad rule in a redistribution scheme would be to arrive at areas which would give a 661st part, or as near as possible, of the total electorate. I am excluding the University seats, of course.

1834. (*Chairman.*) This system, in France, makes it automatic?—You mean that you adjust. How frequently? From year to year?

1835. I think every four years.—Of course, equal electoral areas would imply the adoption of some automatic system, which would not be a matter of supreme difficulty.

1836. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You stated that there was no particular public interest taken in the question of proportional representation. Is it your opinion that there is general satisfaction with the present system as it stands?—No, I would not say that. There is a general demand for redistribution, but the demand for reform which comes to me does not extend beyond that. There are complaints as to three candidates for two seats, but redistribution is the great trouble.

1837. But there is some complaint, as regards the question of three-man contests, that the majority is not always fairly represented?—That is so.

1838. Is that growing, do you think?—No. It would grow if the disease increased, I assume. If, owing to the development of the Labour Party or the Socialist Party there were more candidates for seats, the difficulty might, of course, increase in a spasmodic kind of way; or it might die away.

1839. Is your view distinctly in favour of single-member constituencies?—Very. I do not say it is a perfect solution, but I do not think the perfect solution is attainable.

1840. Then you are not in favour of applying the single transferable vote to single-member constituencies?—No, I do not think it is necessary.

1841. I gather from something that fell from you that you regard the intelligence of the ordinary mass of the electors, or a large mass of them, as distinctly inferior to that of, say, the electors who would take part in one of those trial proportional elections?—Yes, infinitely.

1842. You think there is a very serious difference, which would make itself felt in the working of proportional representation?—Everyone who has anything to do with the practical details of elections knows that there is a certain residuum of the electorate, and a considerable body, too, which has no real political opinion and very little education. The standard of illiteracy is not particularly high, it is true, in Great Britain. It is very high, or appears to be, in Ireland; it is not so high as it appears to be. After all, it is not a very difficult matter to make a mark, but there are masses of people who could not tell you who was Prime Minister, and would not know who Mr. Asquith was if you asked them.

1843. You object to large constituencies returning a number of members quite apart from proportional representation altogether?—I cannot see how they would do it under anything but proportional representation.

1844. In any case you object to the large district?—The large constituency presents physical and geographical difficulties of all kinds.

1845. I gather you think the strain would be very much greater in a large constituency than in a single-member constituency—the strain on the member and on the candidate?—Yes.

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[Continued.]

1846. It was stated by another witness that in his opinion the strain would not be greater, because under the existing system a candidate or member does all he can already, and you cannot make him do more?—I am afraid people look at this from an individual point of view. The man who thinks he does all he can might find that his opinion was not wholly shared by numbers of his constituents.

1847. You think there is more to be extracted yet in the way of work in many cases?—Yes, I think so.

1848. You stated also that in the event of proportional representation being applied and having large districts, and this complex system getting into working order, it would really, in many cases, tend to increase the power of the "boss"?—Yes.

1849. Is there such a thing as a "boss" in this country?—I do not like the word. I quoted it. There is no such thing as a "boss" in this country, but it is applied to party managers generally by the gentlemen who contribute to "Representation," and, therefore, I used it as a quotation. There is no such thing as a "boss" here. As I say, the whole tendency to-day is in the direction of greater and greater representation in your organisations.

1850. You think the active elector now has more and more influence—the man who really does think and exert himself?—Undoubtedly. The working-man, for instance, is in a very different position. There are attempts at wire-pulling, and those attempts frequently lead to disaster, but, as a rule, matters are not wire-pulled to-day to the same extent as formerly. Men try to influence large bodies of people, but it is the large body of electors who have the real influence. They are the power behind the party manager, and unless he has that power behind him, sooner or later he is sure to come to grief.

The witness withdrew.

Mr. JOHN W. GULLAND, M.P., called and examined.

Memorandum handed in by the Witness.

I have been since 1906 Member of Parliament for Dumfries Burghs. For ten years I was secretary of the Liberal Association in West Edinburgh, and for a long period of years was on the Executive and Organising Committee of the Scottish Liberal Association. I have also been a member of the Edinburgh School Board and of Edinburgh Town Council. I have been a keen participator in elections all my life.

My knowledge is chiefly about Scotland. A very strong feeling prevails that the present system of election is unsatisfactory, and that a change is required. There is a tendency for three-cornered fights to increase. In the 1906 election no fewer than four seats—Cambridge Division of Glasgow, North Ayrshire, Govan, and North-West Lanark—were won by a candidate who did not receive a majority of the votes cast.

Redistribution Necessary.

Any electoral reform must include redistribution of seats. The anomalies in Scotland are glaring. The Partick Division of Lanarkshire is the largest constituency, with 23,320 electors, while Sutherlandshire is the smallest with 2,855. The average number of electors in a constituency is 10,400. This is a more trustworthy figure to go by than population, because the population of Scotland has greatly altered in geographical distribution since the last census in 1901. The average of population in a constituency is 62,112.

Redistribution would involve considerable change, much of which would be regrettable. For instance, some of the constituencies have great historical associations. Dumfries Burghs have had the same group of Burghs since the Union of 1707, and Robert Burns has immortalised the Parliamentary elections there in some of his best poems. It would undoubtedly be a great wrench for an alteration to be made, but the necessity of this must frankly be recognised. Since the redistribution of 1885 great industrial changes have taken place in Scotland, which make new grouping unavoidable.

1851. So much for the elector; now for the elected. Has, in your opinion, this development of the present system during the last twenty-five years improved, on the whole, the character of the member and made him a more politically intelligent, thinking, articulate person or not?—I believe the tendency is in the direction of improvement. He certainly becomes more articulate. That may not be wholly an advantage, but in the olden days it was not necessary for a man to be able to say very much. Frequently men got through their political careers reasonably well without making speeches at all, but to-day a man must be articulate; he has to make speeches.

1852. The tendency is, therefore, that at any rate to some extent—to use a slang expression—he has to "mug up" political questions?—He has to get a better grasp of them. The electors would soon find out if he made speeches which were too nonsensical. He has to "mug up" the subjects.

1853. You think, on the whole, the tendency of the present system is to promote rather more study and rather greater knowledge of political questions on the part of the average member?—I do. I think the more strenuous methods which are pursued to-day have a gradual tendency to raise the political intelligence of the country generally. These constant meetings which are being held, and the publications which are constantly being circulated, must all produce some effect.

1854. But practically elections are becoming more political, if I may use that expression?—They are becoming more political, and the electors, having their interests once excited, look naturally to the press for information.

1855. The Labour men, I suppose, are political? They have to be, I suppose?—Yes, organised labour.

1856. And that, to a certain extent, sets the pace?—Yes.

Take three sets of neighbouring constituencies in the east and west of Scotland to show the continuous change going on.

	Number of Electors at General Election.				
	1885 and 1886.	1892.	1895.	1900.	1906.
East Fife	9,233	9,133	9,432	9,505	9,998
West Fife	8,429	9,800	10,637	11,206	15,272
Lanarkshire	8,939	10,496	11,392	12,998	15,375
Mid.					
Lanarkshire	8,981	8,818	9,136	9,134	9,950
South.					
Edinburgh Central.	8,269	7,725	7,580	7,630	6,926
Edinburgh South.	8,754	10,794	12,053	14,794	16,832

Proportional Representation.

If redistribution is to take place, it will be almost easier to divide into large constituencies having from three to seven members, than into single-member constituencies. Without some automatic plan for redistribution after every census, the electoral division of the country becomes rapidly out of date. If single-member constituencies are adhered to, frequent changes of boundary are necessary. The other plan is really simpler and more lasting,—to adopt larger areas with fixed boundaries, changing when made necessary by increase or decrease of population, the number of members allotted to each constituency. Most parts of Scotland could be grouped in a general way into constituencies with similar interests.

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Edinburgh and Leith, at present five constituencies with 61,470 electors, would make one group with six members. The electorate would be rather added to, because of the Municipal boundary being considerably wider than the Parliamentary, which would have to be extended.

The Lothians, at present three constituencies with 35,772 electors (which number would be reduced by the present Mid Lothian electors residing within the municipal area of Edinburgh), would be a group with three Members.

Fife, which at present comprises four entire constituencies and half of another one, and contains 43,075 electors, would be a constituency with four Members.

Glasgow at present comprises seven constituencies. The combined electorate is 88,403, which would make a group with nine Members, except that perhaps an enlarged area would have to be created with an additional few Members.

Ayrshire comprises two whole constituencies and parts of other two, with a total electorate of 45,883. This would make a group with four or five Members.

Aberdeen, City and County, would combine with Kincardineshire and those of the Elgin Burghs which are situated in Aberdeenshire, to make a constituency of 56,635 electors, with five or six Members.

A little care, with a knowledge of existing conditions, could re-arrange the whole of Scotland in this way. The only difficulty lies in connection with the Highlands and Islands. Such counties as Argyleshire, Invernessshire, Ross and Cromarty, and Orkney and Shetland present great difficulties for a candidate, and to group these would give great trouble to the candidates. I understand that the thinly populated areas in the north of Finland and Sweden form exceptions to the general application of Proportional Representation there. Following that precedent, these exceptional areas might remain as single-member constituencies.

I am not aware that the official political associations in Scotland have fully considered this question. They are shy about passing resolutions on subjects on which the party leaders have not definitely declared themselves. An exception must be made as to the Young Scots' Society, an active body of young men with branches in various parts of the country. They have often discussed this question and passed resolutions in its favour. I am Honorary President of this Society, and was present at the Annual Conference held in Perth on 24th April 1909. A resolution was then unanimously passed as follows:—

“That this Conference, in view of the unsatisfactory results of our present system of elections, and wishing to secure majority rule and a fair representation of the people, declares in favour of the principle of Proportional Representation and of the transferable vote, and expresses its regret that the Government failed to incorporate this principle in the Scottish Education Act.”

The Proportional Representation Society has a Branch in Glasgow which has held several meetings in the West of Scotland. Its Office Bearers include prominent men of all parties. The Press in Scotland has often commented favourably on the system, and the voting paper for the recent model election appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Dundee Advertiser*. Several Trades Councils have discussed the idea. Mr. Churchill is a Scottish Member, and speaking at Manchester on 23rd May 1909 he expressed approval of Proportional Representation, at any rate in areas with a great concentration of people.

Education (Scotland) Bill, 1908.

Since 1872 the method of voting at School Board elections in Scotland has been the cumulative vote, each elector having as many votes as there are seats, and being allowed to distribute them in any way he pleases. This has been strongly objected to as giving undue representation to minorities. In the Education Bill of 1908 the Government proposed to abolish this system. During the discussions in the Scottish Grand Committee a division was taken on the subject, and the cumulative vote was abolished by 27 to 21,

An amendment was then proposed to adopt a system of proportional representation by the single transferable vote. This was opposed by the Government, but received so many as 18 votes against 22 cast in opposition to it. The large support accorded to a proposal that was somewhat novel was rather striking. In the summer and autumn of 1908 considerable controversy arose in Scotland upon this point. I wrote a letter to the Scottish newspapers, which evoked considerable correspondence. This letter was afterwards published as a leaflet and sent to all the School Boards in Scotland. Many of them discussed it and expressed approval. On the report stage of the Bill an amendment was made to reinstate the cumulative vote. Unexpectedly and almost at the close of the time allotted for the Bill, the Secretary for Scotland accepted this amendment. This course precluded the possibility of discussing the adoption of the single transferable vote. The larger School Boards just elected are already beginning to agitate in favour of a reform in the mode of voting. The next election takes place in 1911, and Edinburgh and Glasgow have already agreed to press Parliament to reconsider the matter. I mention these occurrences to show that proportional representation has been considerably discussed in Scotland and approved of as a practical scheme.

Practicability.

There is no difficulty about carrying out an election on the lines of the single transferable vote. I have been present at the counting of votes at many elections and at two held by the Proportional Representation Society. Those taking part in these elections have shown a perfectly clear understanding of the system, and the number of spoiled votes have been trifling. I have been very much struck at the simplicity of the carrying out of these elections, compared with School Board elections under the cumulative vote. I was present at the counting of votes at the last School Board election in Edinburgh in April 1909, when each elector had 21 votes to be distributed in any way. No fewer than 588 papers were absolutely rejected, and at least 500 others were allowed by arrangement of the candidates' agents, though legally they were not valid. I noticed then, as I have done otherwise, that the people who spoil the ballot papers are not the illiterate or ignorant people. They are usually well educated, who write a good hand, but who do not apparently take the trouble to obey the instructions. The spoiled papers in the Edinburgh election were nearly double those of Glasgow.

Extended Choice of Candidates.

Proportional representation would extend the choice of candidates. At present there can only be one of each party in a constituency, and many electors feel that this man, whoever he may be, does not quite represent their views. If he is a Liberal, he is too Radical for some and too much of a Whig for others. A larger number of candidates would provide a greater variety of type, and therefore would create a more widespread interest in the election among the electors. The plea is made that at present a minority is represented in a rough and ready way, but merely to know that the member for a constituency hundreds of miles away is in political sympathy is not in any sense of the word representation. There are many constituencies in the country, where at present the majority is overwhelmingly of one political opinion, and a large minority feels itself unrepresented. There is a fiction that a Member of Parliament represents all his constituents. That is true to a certain extent, but as a matter of experience I have found that many electors who have voted against their Member will not go to him upon any question whatever. I am an elector in West Edinburgh, which has had a Unionist Member since 1892. Many Liberals never dreamed of going to their Member, but have approached some other man, and, since I have been in Parliament, have come to me.

Local Affairs.

Only Members of Parliament appreciate how largely their time is taken up with local matters. They have

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to approach the different Government Departments upon an endless variety of topics. These matters as a rule have no reference to existing Parliamentary Divisions, and in a city it would be very much better if a man were Member for the whole city rather than for a Division. This argument also applies to the case of a county including Burghs, where in many matters the general interests of the county have to be attended to by the Burgh Member.

Registration.

Scotland has a splendid system of self-acting registration, but in every constituency this has to be attended to at considerable expense by the candidates and their agents. In an enlarged area this would scarcely be worth while, and a considerable sum would be saved in this way. Moreover, with enlarged areas the worst features of plural voting would be got rid of.

In Burghs with more than one Division there is at present much energy devoted to the transfer of votes from one Division to the other. A man may vote in any Division in which he has a qualification, but in not more than one. He may make his choice. In Edinburgh for many years on both sides of politics there has been a constant transfer in the hope of strengthening the party's position in one or other of the Divisions. Recently there have been elections in no fewer than three of the four Divisions there,—the South, then the East, then the West. It was currently reported, with what truth I know not, that the precise moment of the vacancy in West Edinburgh was caused by a desire to ascertain the Unionist party strength there. It was said that the object was to discover how many Unionist votes might with safety be transferred to the South or East Divisions, in the hope of increasing the Unionist prospects there. There may be no truth in this idea, but it would be under the present system quite a legitimate proceeding, and shows how in these restricted Divisions manipulation of votes may take place. This is the modern method of gerrymandering, which will be indulged in by both sides as long as it is permissible and possible. Any redistribution of single-member constituencies in Edinburgh or Glasgow would be regarded with great suspicion by all parties, and it would be impossible to devise a scheme of Division that would be universally acceptable and would at the same time forecast the possible future trend of population.

The Result upon Parliament.

The objection is made that proportional representation would cause the formation of groups in the House of Commons. This has already taken place. Party discipline would be less rigid, but this would probably not be bad, and would stop the growing omnipotence of Governments. The House of Commons might regain some of its lost power from the Executive. Another feature would probably be that the Government would have to face more businesslike ways of doing business, which would be of advantage to the country.

The leading Members of each party would be practically certain of election, and the House of Commons would be saved the denudation of the Front Opposition Bench which occurred in 1906, and which is not for the benefit of its proceedings.

The objection has been taken that this system would encourage the election of cranks and faddists. This could not be unless a large number of people voted for them. It might secure the election, not of men who were independent of all parties, but of men of original and independent spirit, and surely it must be for the good of the country that such should have a seat in Parliament.

The Result upon Scotland.

Scotland would probably gain by such a scheme. At present the electors there range themselves into parties upon questions of Imperial politics, which are often English questions. Upon Scottish questions there is often little difference between parties, but progress is not made because of the division upon controversial issues. If, instead of being ranged into parties, there

was a sort of gradation of candidates, not standing so much in direct opposition to one another, the topics upon which there was general agreement would have more chance of being legislated upon. Scotland would not be dragged at the chariot wheel of parties.

Though I am a Liberal, I would far rather upon Scottish legislation have more Scottish Unionists, than continue the present system. At present Scottish Bills are sent to the Scottish Grand Committee, composed of all the Scottish Members, with the addition of fifteen added. These are taken from the parties in such proportion as to make the total membership of the Committee a reflection of the state of parties in the House. The result is that a considerable number of the English Opposition have seats upon the Committee. They know little of the business, and spin out the proceedings unduly in a way that no Scottish Member would dare to do in view of his constituents. By the constitution of this Committee the House tries in a clumsy way to rectify the inequality of the electoral system. In the appointment of all Committees, scrupulous care is taken to make them proportionate to the membership of the House. Care should also be taken to ensure that the membership of the House is proportionate to the electorate.

Second Ballot.

I regard this as an impossible scheme. It is sufficiently difficult to induce electors to vote at one election, and many have to make great sacrifices in order to do so. To ask them to come on another day would not induce a large poll. The probability is also that bad feeling would be aroused on the part of the supporters of the defeated candidate, and the combinations would not be lastingly satisfactory.

Alternative Vote.

The alternative vote in single-member constituencies would certainly be preferable to the present system, but would not be satisfactory. A man would give his second vote, not to the candidate whom he liked next best but to the one whom he disliked least. In practice this would probably be given according to the temporary coalition of the moment. This combination would very likely change considerably during the existence of a Parliament, and men would regret their vote all the time. Moreover a Member would know from the published figures to what extent he depended upon a minority for his return, and his position would be very difficult. These drawbacks would not apply in the case of proportional representation, where, with the greater choice, every man would have the opportunity of giving a series of votes for those with whose opinions he agreed. And the Member would feel that he had a definite section or proportion of his constituency at his back who had voted for him because they agreed with him, and not because they disagreed less with him than with someone else.

1857. (*Chairman.*) You are Member of Parliament for the Dumfries Burghs?—Yes.

1858. For some considerable time you were Secretary of the Liberal Association for West Edinburgh?—Yes.

1859. And you have taken an active part in elections both Municipal and Parliamentary?—Yes.

1860. Your memorandum deals chiefly with Scotland, where you have had practically all your experience?—Yes.

1861. In the first place, do you consider a scheme of redistribution is essential?—Yes.

1862. You will no doubt allow us to put this memorandum in as evidence?—Certainly.

1863. We will therefore briefly go through it. You point out several very glaring anomalies in Scotland?—Yes.

1864. This Commission really only deals with redistribution as a necessary corollary of any scheme which comes before us. We are not to inquire into the actual method by which redistribution is to be carried

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[Continued.]

out, and therefore I think it unnecessary to go through the figures you have given?—Quite so.

1865. You consider proportional representation would make redistribution easier by adding several constituencies together?—Yes. I have looked into Scotland and tried to work out a scheme of redistribution in different ways, and I find from one's practical knowledge that it is really easier to do it in large constituencies than single-member constituencies.

1866. By grouping Edinburgh and Leith, and so on?—Yes.

1867. I take it you are in favour of what is known as the single transferable vote?—Yes.

1868. What are the limits of the constituencies—the minimum and maximum number of members they should return?—With regard to Scotland, one would like to see a minimum of perhaps five, but I recognise that some districts would be unduly large with five, and that three would be the minimum. I should think you would work up to perhaps seven or nine, or in connection with Glasgow and the surrounding district it might be perhaps up to eleven, but I should think that would be about the outside.

1869. You refer to the difficulty in connection with the Highlands and Islands. Would you be prepared, given that you could group the remainder of the country, to allow existing constituencies to remain?—In the Highlands and Islands, yes, I am afraid almost that would have to be done. It is difficult enough as it is to cover them, especially if the election is in winter. I believe it is done in Finland and Sweden, though I do not know the particulars.

1870. There are a great variety of constituencies there, from large numbers of members down to one?—Yes.

1871. Is there any demand in Scotland for a change?—Yes, certainly at the meetings of Liberal Associations there is always a resolution about some change, but I do not think they have ever gone into detail.

1872. You cannot say whether proportional representation is a popular question yet?—It has been a great deal discussed in Scotland.

1873. Is it a matter which the ordinary member of Parliament speaks about when he addresses his constituents?—If he dealt with the subject of the franchise, he would in the majority of cases almost inevitably refer to it. He might not spend much time going into detail, but would be almost bound if he discussed the franchise to say either yes or no.

1874. Can you gather at all whether it is acceptable or the reverse?—There are many indications that it is acceptable.

1875. You say you yourself moved only a few weeks ago a resolution upon it?—I was present at a conference of the Young Scots, who are a very active political body, and they have taken it up and have agitated it a good deal throughout the country.

1876. That is a body very representative of Scottish Liberalism throughout the country?—Yes, the younger and more progressive type.

1877. You cannot speak with any authority as to whether the Conservative party have taken up this question at all?—I cannot say, except I understand some of their leading members have given evidence here—Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr. Parker Smith.

1878. But you do not know the opinion of the rank and file of the party?—I do not.

1879. You have in Scotland the old cumulative vote similar to what used to exist here?—Yes.

1880. I gather from your memorandum that it is practically universally condemned?—Yes, with the exception of the Catholics and a certain section of Episcopalians, who have separate schools; otherwise the bulk of Scottish opinion is against it.

1881. It is troublesome in the actual practical working?—Yes, and very unsatisfactory.

1882. The experience you have of the cumulative vote tends to show whether or not a scheme of single transferable voting would be difficult to carry out. The methods of counting present the same difficulties, I understand?—I think they would be simpler with the single transferable vote.

1883. You think, if the cumulative vote can be successfully carried out, there would be no difficulty in carrying out the transferable vote?—No.

1884. As far as the actual difficulties of the preference are concerned, you do not anticipate much difficulty?—No, I do not think there would be any difficulty at all. We have heard evidence here that it would be difficult, but in Scotland the electors are intelligent and educated. I do not see the slightest difficulty. We can at least count up to 11, which would be the number, and I cannot conceive any difficulty.

1885. Now on the question of the counting of the votes. That represents complications more than the present system, undoubtedly?—Yes.

1886. You think that would not be a real insuperable difficulty?—I do not think so at all. I have been present many times at the counting of School Board Election votes with the cumulative vote, and that is a tremendously complicated thing, and I have also been present at the counting of the election conducted by the Proportional Representation Society, and it seemed to me extremely simple in comparison.

1887. Is that the election which took place at Caxton Hall?—Yes, the last one.

1888. Would you say the men employed counting there were of a more expert character than the ordinary counter at an election?—I understand they had no previous experience.

1889. You think you would in practice in ordinary localities find men quite as experienced?—Yes, I may say that Lord Courtney was a candidate at the last election for West Edinburgh, where I happened to be a voter, and before the election he addressed a meeting on the subject, and there was a test election, and the enumerators there were just taken from the audience, and they had practically no difficulty in manipulating the voting papers. I think everybody agreed in that experience that it was really simple. Of course there was a directing head to tell about the quota, and so on, but it was quite simple.

1890. Do you think there would be any difficulty in finding calculators for the mathematical portion?—I do not think so. Again, in Scotland we are intelligent people.

1891. In Scotland is the community divided into parties such as would take advantage of minority representation?—Yes, there is a strong Labour vote, for instance, and at the last election there were four seats won by candidates who did not receive a majority of the votes. There is a very strong feeling among the Labour men that the present system is not satisfactory, and sometimes also among what one might call the Radical wing of the Liberal party.

1892. The extreme section who would like to have a representative of their own?—Yes.

1893. In other words, you feel full advantage would be taken of this system?—Yes, I think so.

1894. What is your view as to the power of the party organiser under a single transferable vote system?—I think in Scotland again there is rather a difference. I do not think we have the "boss," as one witness called him. We have really a freely elected Liberal Association or Conservative Association who work by committees, and they are not under the thumb of a party manager.

1895. I understand party organisations in Scotland are very democratic?—Yes.

1896. Practically all the office bearers are elected?—Yes, and they rather resent interference from headquarters.

1897. You do not think the tendency would be to increase the power of the organisation under this scheme?—I do not think it would. I think it would be rather the other way, that every kind of man in the organisation would feel he was voting for his own representative.

1898. As far as the House of Commons is concerned, would you view with satisfaction the appearance there of numerous groups?—I do not think you would have them more numerous than they are at present. I think the only difference would be that you might have

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[Continued.]

a slightly graded scale of Liberals, perhaps, which I think would be a good thing.

1899. You think the Government of the day would have as effective a party to carry out its work as it possesses at present?—I think so, and I think the tendency of it would be to give a little more scope to its party to listen a little more to what the party wants, and not drive it so hard, but take it rather more into consultation.

1900. In fact I might almost take it you think the Government of the day, in its executive capacity, has perhaps too much power?—I do.

1901. And that the independent Member of Parliament is really crushed out?—Yes. I would not put it the "independent Member," but the Members of independent opinion, and that the whole system at present increases the power of the Government.

1902. You would welcome the return of more independents among representatives?—Yes.

1903. As far as the electorate is concerned, you lay special stress on the opportunity of the elector to have a more extended choice?—Yes.

1904. You think that will make him take a more active interest in politics?—I think it would. I know of many cases just now where, we will say amongst Liberals, some Radicals abstain from voting because the candidate is a Whig, or *vice versa*, and then when he is elected they feel they have no interest in him; whereas if there was a larger choice, and there was a constituency where, perhaps, three or four Liberals were members, every man in the constituency would feel that one or other represented him particularly and personally. I attach great importance to that.

1905. And it will give the hopeless minority a chance or a feeling that they had a chance, at any rate?—Yes, it would. I confess that in Scotland there are many constituencies where Conservatives have practically no chance and one feels that they are almost permanently disfranchised.

1906. I suppose there are constituencies which never return one of the opposite party?—Yes, the constituency for which I sit, for instance, since the Reform Bill.

1907. It has been urged here very frequently that making the constituency larger than it is at present will tend to prevent the local connection between member and constituency. Do you think there is anything in that contention?—I do not think so.

1908. And that he will not be able to become so acquainted with the electors?—He will not cover the ground so completely as he does at present, but I think to all intents and purposes he will—especially in the cities. At present in cities at election times a man covers the ground again and again until he is sick of it, and the electors are sick of it; whereas, if it was an extended area, everybody would have a chance of seeing him. I think the only places that might suffer would be the very small villages, but there at present there are other means taken of encouraging interest in politics. I think the fact that the candidate himself could not go, would mean that the other men who were interested in politics would take more interest and would address the meetings and keep the political interests alive. So I think, instead of making for less interest in politics, it would very likely create more.

1909. You do not think the labour thrown on the actual candidate himself would be insuperable or too much?—I do not think so. I do not know whether anything has been made here of the complete change in elections that is due to motor-cars and the increase of travelling facilities. A man can get over his constituency now with a motor-car six times as easily as he used to be able to.

1910. It has been suggested that the work entailed on the candidate would be so great that none but professional politicians would be able to enter the House?—I do not think that is so, and I think you would get a better choice in this way: I know now many excellent men who would make excellent Members of Parliament, but who are very shy and afraid of having to stand by themselves, and who if they were standing under the shelter of and along with more experienced men, would come forward.

1911. Do you think the expense would be greater under the proposed change?—I do not think it would, specially for this reason. At present the theory is that you address every elector in a constituency. You send him your posted material and literature and all that sort of thing. Probably a great deal of that would be dropped and you would address yourself only to your own supporters and the doubtful people and leave the absolute opponents alone. I see many ways in which a rearrangement like this would produce economy.

1912. But supposing every elector had to be treated on the same basis as he is now treated, the expenditure would be greater undoubtedly?—Yes, but there would be more to share it and divide it up.

1913. Then an independent candidate not standing in connection with any party would have to bear the whole of it?—Yes, but he would not appeal to the whole constituency, but only to his friends and supporters, and they would be known people.

1914. As far as expense or labour is concerned you do not consider they would be insuperable objections?—I do not think so.

1915. You claim for this scheme that members would be able to take more active interest in local affairs?—Yes. At present, for instance, in a city the local affairs that come before a man are not those of his division but those of the city. It is very largely the same thing in a county division with the affairs of a county. The local affairs do not go by divisions but by boundaries.

1916. You refer to the question of registration. Has Scotland a different system from what prevails in England?—Yes, there is an official who attends to the registration, and it is done with much less friction than in England. There is less left to the party managers there.

1917. They still have to make objections and all that sort of thing?—Yes, but the work is done by a public official.

1918. You refer to the fact that in burghs there are transfers of votes from one division to another and you mention Edinburgh. Is that a practice which is generally prevalent?—Yes. I have worked it, so I know.

1919. Would that be stopped by the single transferable vote?—Yes, because there would be no possibility of it, as Edinburgh would be one constituency.

1920. But if you can work a large area such as Edinburgh like that, would it not be possible to work the actual constituency when large as a single one and try to arrange your preferences in such a way that you obtain more than your fair share of representation?—You mean under a scheme of proportional representation?

1921. Yes, assuming that were adopted?—It would defeat its own object. The man would be returned according to the proportion of voters as it would work out.

1922. But it largely depends how they give their second preferences?—Yes, but I should think in the long run that would just work out in proportion to the strength of parties in the constituencies, which is really what is desired.

1923. You contemplate with satisfaction the fact that the party discipline would be less rigid?—Yes, I do.

1924. You attach great importance to the fact that the leading members would always obtain election?—Yes, I think they would have a much greater chance. I think at the beginning of this Parliament the result was most unfortunate with regard to the front Opposition Bench. With regard to Scotland, there was no old Law Officer of the Crown on the Opposition side, and when dealing with the actual work of legislation in the Scottish Committee it caused no end of trouble, because there was no responsible person with whom to negotiate or who could say what the law was.

1925. You think under this proposed system men like Sir Robert Finlay and Mr. Clyde would retain representation?—Yes, I think they would have a much greater chance.

1926. Have you gone into any other systems, for instance, the Belgian list system?—I know it generally.

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[Continued.]

1927. Do you consider it application to this country ?
—No, I do not like the fixed nature of the list.

1928. You greatly prefer the single transferable vote ?—Yes.

1929. You regard the second ballot as quite out of the question ?—I think so.

1930. The alternative vote you say is preferable to the present system, but not so satisfactory as the single transferable vote ?—Yes, I think so.

1931. Supposing it was not found practicable to adopt the single transferable vote, what effect do you think it would have upon future development if we had the alternative vote ? Would it militate for or against the single transferable vote ?—I think it would be a good beginning. I should hope that if that were adopted there would be one difficulty removed, and then it would come to be very largely a question of the increase of the areas. As a stepping-stone I think it would be quite good, though I think it would be infinitely preferable to make the whole plunge at one time, because the alternative vote would land you still with a good many difficulties and anomalies, and it would be far better to take a bold course at once, I think.

1932. Would you be quite prepared to see this scheme extended to limited areas—the large boroughs, say—to start with ?—Yes. In Scotland, looking at the map, with the exception of the Highlands and Islands, you can group constituencies into homogeneous groups with similar interests.

1933. Would you prefer to see this adopted first for local elections, municipal elections, and so on ?—I would like to see it anyhow. We tried last year, under the Education (Scotland) Bill, to have this system adopted, and there was a very large amount of support, and an amendment which was opposed by the Government received 18 votes against 22. The country was a good deal agitated about it and interested in it last autumn. I should certainly like to see it in the election of School Boards, and I hope very strongly that whatever happens here with regard to Parliamentary elections, it will be adopted sooner or later for School Board purposes in Scotland.

1934. I understand that particular amendment was dropped on account of time ?—There was not time. The Government went back on their desire to abolish the cumulative vote, and therefore the amendment in favour of proportional representation was not reached, because the cumulative vote was re-instated.

1935. Not because it was considered to be disadvantageous ?—No; on the report stage in the House it was not reached because the cumulative vote was reimposed and the other amendment came later on the paper.

1936. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) The cumulative vote cannot, I suppose, be universally condemned, or else there would have been no reason for the Secretary for Scotland to re-incorporate it in the Education Bill of last year ?—The Catholics were in favour of it. That made the exception.

1937. Is not that on the ground that the Catholics believe that the cumulative vote effectively gives representation to minorities ?—Yes, I think I am quite free to say that though they like the cumulative vote, they prefer proportional representation to the system that the Government wished.

1938. With regard to this resolution passed at the Young Scots meeting, was it a large meeting ?—It was a conference of representatives from the different branches throughout the country.

1939. Did you have an animated discussion, or any strength of opposition to the resolution ?—None at all. It was unanimous. It has been passed, not only this year, but at previous conferences, and it was a re-statement of a principle to which they had been committed for years.

1940. Would you say that was the unanimity of enthusiasm, or of apathy ?—I would say of enthusiasm, because in previous years there had been discussion, and we had arrived at that conclusion. I think two years ago there was an animated discussion, and a very strong majority.

1941. Therefore, you would say that whatever feeling there may be on the subject revealed in Scotland is in favour of it rather than against it ?—Yes.

1942. As to the difficulty which you anticipate in the Highlands and Islands, do you think that is peculiar to the Highlands and Islands, and is not a feature of all agricultural constituencies ?—No. If you take Argyllshire and Inverness-shire, it is the question of the Hebrides and the difficulty of communication, and then there is the difficulty with regard to the Orkneys and the Shetlands.

1943. Would you be prepared to see this system tried, as so many other systems are tried, in Scotland only ?—Personally I would, because from the point of view of Scotland and Scottish affairs, I think it would be extremely advantageous. I feel that the present system throws Scottish questions into the melting-pot here. It is very unfair to Scotland. The party system is so rigid and divides Scottish representatives upon their own questions, upon which they do not wish to be divided.

1944. A large number of the very able arguments with which you support it in your memorandum are applicable only in Scotland, and that is why I suggested that possibly you would be willing to see an experiment made in that country before being made in England ?—I should be quite pleased with regard to that if at the same time some provision was made that Scottish opinion should prevail on Scottish questions. That is to say, I do not want a partial experiment. If Scottish people are allowed some measure of Home Rule to carry out this experiment, then I would be very strong upon it, but I do not want it to be an experiment on one part of the problem and not on the other.

1945. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Do you say, so far as you can judge, the Labour Party in Scotland are in favour of proportional representation ?—I am not entitled to speak of that. I know the Labour Party do not like the present system, but I have no right to speak for them; but I say I think they are rather hard hit under the present system.

1946. (*Chairman.*) You think under the proposed scheme they would benefit ?—I think they would. At present they send two members. I think their voting strength at the last election would entitle them to more. I know there is dissatisfaction.

The witness withdrew.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

Thursday, 17th June 1909.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Mr. JOSEPH KING called and examined.

1947. (*Chairman*.) You have taken an active interest in political matters?—Yes, for about 30 years.

1948. You have written several books on the subject?—I have written one hand-book on Electoral Reform, and I have written papers and articles, and I have lectured on the subject frequently.

1949. You have also been a candidate yourself on several occasions?—Yes; three times I have been a candidate for Parliament.

1950. You have come to the conclusion that the present system of one member constituencies is not a satisfactory one?—To a great number of people it is very unsatisfactory.

1951. You have considered the various schemes which have been proposed?—Yes, I have come to the conclusion more and more that the second ballot would no longer be popular and is now no longer desired, and that preferential voting, as proposed by Mr. Robertson and Mr. Dundas White, would not really meet the question which has to be met in so many places—an increasing number of places—where you have three parties fairly equally divided all aiming at getting one seat.

1952. You refer in your memorandum to the second ballot as having been an article of Radical faith from 1880 to 1885?—Yes.

1953. Can you recall at all the reason why it was dropped after that period?—I do not think it was ever really dropped as an article of Radical creed, only it has tended to recede into the background. If it has been dropped it is because other electoral reforms seem more important, such as the abolition of plural voting, and also because it would only naturally come up at a time when there was a wide scheme of electoral reform.

1954. But, practically speaking, there are now very few advocates of it in this country?—I think very few.

1955. The single transferable vote, or preferential voting, you think has many marked advantages over the second ballot?—Yes. I think it would settle the whole election at one vote, and there would not be the lack of interest and diminishing numbers going to the poll at a second ballot as there would naturally be if there were two election days. I think also it would prevent any deals between two parties to exclude the candidate who would be most awkward to them. I have heard in times back Socialists declare that they would of course always vote at a second ballot for the party which was in the minority, so that the Socialist party should have, as it were, the balancing power. That would be obviated, I think.

1956. Would that be obviated if single-member constituencies were retained?—If you had single-member constituencies and preferential voting you would not have those cynical deals, and you would not have arrangements and proposals that men should vote simply so as to put their own party into a more commanding position. You would, I think, always have people voting in order to secure, if not their own candidate, one of the other candidates whom they the more preferred.

1957. Do you think there would be less tendency for party managers to try and organise a deal?—I think so, exactly.

1958. And it would be more difficult for them to do so even if they were inclined?—Yes, I think so.

1959. You refer in your memorandum to the fact that at the present moment there are in many constituencies three parties which are almost equal?—Yes, I think that is growing very much. I have been lately a good deal down in Bristol, where I think the tendency is for the three parties—Labour, Liberal and Unionist—to become much more evenly balanced than they were. I think down at Bristol, and in other towns which I know, especially Manchester, and some of the Yorkshire towns like Bradford, we shall see three candidates for one seat probably in the majority of cases.

1960. In fact, throughout the country you think this is a state of affairs which will increase?—Yes, undoubtedly.

1961. The present position of parties in the House you think is an accident?—Yes.

1962.—And not likely to be repeated?—I think more and more the probability will be that no one party will get a clear majority over the other. I think that is almost evident.

1963. Do you consider it is necessary for the Government of the day to have a large majority?—No, I do not think so. I think a good working majority is sometimes better than a large majority.

1964. The tendency of all proportional representation on your own showing would be for the majority to be less rather than as large as recent majorities have been?—Yes, that, I think, is desirable.

1965. You do not think it would have a tendency for the Government of the day to try and induce the smaller sections to come into line with them?—No, I think not; because in a system of proportional representation—assuming that we have proportional representation—you would have, I think, fewer sections in the House of Commons; that is, you would have fewer members bound absolutely to sectional interests. You would have all your members more representative of masses of people, because they would be appealing, when they went to the poll, to a larger electorate. Therefore I think the strong sectional member who is there for some sectional interest would tend to be less powerful.

1966. But for the purposes of carrying on government would not it be necessary that they should combine possibly two small parties of totally different complexions?—I do not see that that is the obvious outcome. I should say it might be so under certain circumstances, but I believe so much that proportional representation will show a more actual reflex of the popular feeling that I think you would have more men there who represent the nation rather than a party, and that such sectional interest would tend to become less, and the influence of sections would be less.

1967. You do not attach any importance to the maintenance of the dual party system which we have at present?—I attach importance to it in this way: I think the two parties represent two strong currents in human nature, and two great traditions in our national life; but I do not think that the two clear parties can stand out in the future as they have done in the past.

1968. You think the breakdown of the present system is inevitable?—Yes, sooner or later it is inevitable. I think sooner rather than later.

1969. You do not think that this proportional representation system would unduly tend to accelerate

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[Continued.]

that breakdown?—No, I think it would tend to relieve any strain or shock that might come from the breakdown of the party system.

1970. Of the schemes which have been suggested, which would you advocate?—I should advocate the single transferable vote. At one time, when I first began to study the question, I advocated the party-list system, and, in fact, I can remember once or twice having lectured, some years ago now, on electoral reform, and advocated the party-list system as the better; but the more I study it the more I am convinced that the single transferable vote is the better system.

1971. That is the scheme advocated by the Proportional Representation Society?—Yes, Lord Courtney's scheme.

1972. That, you think, is the most practical and most business-like of the various methods?—Yes. I think for one thing it would be so extremely easy to instruct the voters. They have simply to mark on a list of candidates their candidates in the order of their preference.

1973. I should like to go through the objections which you state in your memorandum, and your answers to them?—With regard to the opposition to proportional representation, it seems to me to fall into three groups. First there are the strong party organisers and party agents. I have been struck, in talking to a great number of these men, how slow they are to accept the idea of proportional representation; and I have been struck by the fact that you have had before you party agents of the various parties all giving evidence against it. I should like to point out that of course the party agent has got his party machine working on distinct lines, on which the whole of the country is mapped out into areas and subdivided into separate constituencies which are pigeon-holed, and it is very easy to work. His object, of course, is to win as many of these single seats as possible. Therefore the whole tradition, and the whole aim and object of his work is rather, I should say, electioneering than reforming. The electioneering point of view of the party is always chiefly before him, and I think that explains why the party agents are so usually against proportional representation. I do not attach much importance to their opposition.

1974. You think their opposition is discounted from the nature of their profession?—Yes, I think so. I do not wish to say anything against them as good politicians in many ways, but I think their evidence on this point ought not to be too much pressed. Then there are a number of people who think that proportional representation would not secure the party majority which is necessary to party government. This, I think, is a thing which weighs with a great number of politicians, but I believe myself that with the growth of the Labour party, and with the very strong Nationalist attitude which is taken up by the Irish, and even to some extent by the Welsh, we shall find increasing difficulty in getting a pure party majority. Therefore, I think the opposition on this ground ought to be met by some change in our electoral system. Then there is a third body of opinion to which I specially devote my attention. I think really the strongest body of opposition that we should have to meet in the country at large is the idea that has grown up in the minds of the people generally, that each district has its own member—the one man to whom they look in certain well recognised ways to look after local interests, appear at local celebrations, and so on—and the idea of having two or more members for a district, I think, would cause confusion in the minds of many men, and would be a change so great that they would be ready to oppose it. I have considered this point of view, and I should like to put later on a proposal before the Commission in connection with it.

1975. In any scheme of proportional representation it would be necessary to have a Redistribution Bill?—Of course, that is inevitable, and I think proportional representation would make redistribution easier. Redistribution is always a difficult question, especially if it has to divide the country up as much as possible

with equal areas, because the boundaries have to cut across so many recognised limits, and certain districts which are one for one kind of government may be divided. I think proportional representation would make it easier, because you would only have to divide into much larger areas.

1976. Do you consider it necessary that constituencies should be uniform in size?—No, not at all. I think they might well be as large as to have 10 representatives (which would be about 625,000 population on the average), and I think they might come down to four, or possibly even three in large scattered districts like certain districts in Scotland, where I should not mind seeing even two representatives. I should prefer, except in only exceptional cases, no electoral divisions with less than four members. I think four members ought to be the minimum, except in exceptional cases.

1977. Are you in favour of the electorate being the figure on which the number of members should be taken, or the population?—The population. I think population has been taken in previous cases, and it is a question which I have gone into thoroughly in the light of the experience of foreign countries, where the usual basis is a population basis. I think it is much fairer on the whole.

1978. Notwithstanding the fact that you can ascertain the population at much less frequent intervals than you can the electorate?—Exactly, but I should still take it on the basis of population. You can always take the population as often as you have a redistribution. We take our census every 10 years, and at the present time we are getting on for 30 years since we had a redistribution scheme.

1979. Would you be in favour of any automatic form of redistribution?—Yes, I should like to see after each census a report presented to the House of Commons making recommendations, or something of that kind.

1980. And you think automatic redistribution would be a simpler matter with large constituencies than with small ones?—Yes, that is another point I have considered, and I have come to that conclusion very strongly.

1981. You do not think the formation of large constituencies would destroy local feeling, or local patriotism?—No, I think rather the contrary.

1982. Even if it should be necessary to amalgamate several small counties together?—Yes, even then I think it would certainly not tend to destroy local feeling and local patriotism. I think it would tend to increase it. One must remember that one's local patriotism extends over a much larger area now than it did formerly, before the days when single-member constituencies came into existence, because the means of communication are so much easier, and the area over which newspapers travel is now so much larger.

1983. You see no objection to merging the smaller borough into a county?—No, none whatever. I think it would be a great advantage.

1984. I take it the plan would be to take places like Southampton, returning two members, and turn it into the county of Hampshire?—Yes. Of course, Southampton, which is a very largely increasing place, would be practically the centre of the district. The south-east part of Hampshire, which might include Southampton and Portsmouth, would make a very good area, I think, returning perhaps six or seven members. I have not worked it out, but I expect that is about what it would be.

1985. Then as regards smaller places; for example, Norwich, which now has two members, would that be merged into the county?—Yes, I should think so. It would not be large enough to demand separate representation. There are some cases, of course, where there is a very distinct local feeling. Take the case of Newcastle-on-Tyne, for instance. I think Newcastle-on-Tyne and the Tyneside Division, and the Divisions just around, would make a comparatively small area in extent but a very good area for proportional representation returning perhaps five members, according to the amount of country that you throw in with the city.

1986. You next refer, in your memorandum, to the manner in which the subject has been taken up by the

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Press of the country?—Yes, I have taken special pains to find out what the Press—not only the London Press but the local Press throughout the country—has been saying about the proportional representation movement, and I have been very much struck by the way in which all the leading London papers like the "Times," "Morning Post," "Westminster Gazette," and "Pall Mall Gazette," have spoken with great respect of the movement as if it were a movement that ought to be considered, and for which a great deal might be said. The provincial Press, which is not always ready to take up new movements of this kind, has spoken in many cases with very great approval of the provisional representation movement. I have here a list of 20 papers, and beginning with the "Dundee Advertiser," and including the Edinburgh papers and the Yorkshire papers, the Birmingham papers, and the Bristol papers, all have given during the last two or three years much more attention to it and have spoken on the subject with much more respect than I should have been inclined to think was likely a few years ago.

1987. Would you say that they treat it in any other than an academic manner?—Yes, I think they distinctly look upon it as a question which might have to be faced as a practical question whenever electoral reform comes up.

1988. Is that a feeling which is growing amongst individuals?—No doubt. I often get people speaking to me about it, and treating it as one of the subjects which ought to be faced when Mr. Asquith's promise of an electoral reform measure before this Parliament goes out comes to be realised.

1939. When attention is paid to it, do you find that it is in favour of it, or do you find any opposition to it?—You always find a certain amount of opposition, but the general prevailing feeling, I should say, is that of admitting at once its great advantages and readiness to consider whether it might not be introduced. I do not say that people everywhere are convinced that it is a thing which must be adopted, but I think there is a tendency to look at it favourably and as a practical solution.

1990. Amongst all parties?—Yes, amongst all parties; and I think especially is that the case where there are three parties in the field. Where the Labour, Unionist, and Liberal parties are all fairly divided and there is only a single-member constituency, I think there is a very strong disposition to look upon it as a very practical question.

1991. As to the practical conduct of an election, do you attach any importance to the criticisms which have been directed against it as to the difficulty of working it?—No, none whatever. I have really been more amused than affected otherwise by the criticism that it would imply confusion. For three or four elections I took a very active part in the London School Board fights. There you had areas which were unknown for any other purposes except as School Board areas. You had a large number of candidates, and each voter had 10 or up to 15 votes, which he could distribute cumulatively or in any way be liked amongst the candidates, and there was practically never any difficulty and very few spoilt papers owing to the wrong use of the votes.

1992. But is it not a fact that in the old School Board elections a great majority of the electors voted according to a party ticket?—No, I do not think they did. I think the fact that the popular members of the party were always a very long way above the unpopular members of the same party, though the instructions had been sent round that votes were to be equally divided, is a very clear proof that it was not so. Instructions were always given on party ticket lines, but I should say that not more than 30 or 40 per cent. of the voters followed them out to the letter.

1993. Do you think they showed an intelligent appreciation of it?—I do. I think the same would be shown in proportional representation, with the single transferable vote.

1994. As an actual comparison between cumulative voting and the single transferable vote, which would you say was the more difficult?—I should say the cumulative vote would be very much more difficult.

If a man can write at all he can write the figures 1, 2, 3, 4 opposite the names of those candidates he prefers. I see no difficulty whatever in it.

1995. As to the question of counting, do you consider the Proportional Representation Society's system is a fair one?—Yes.

1996. You do not think it leaves anything to chance?—No, I do not. Before I went into it, and before I saw how elections were worked, I thought there was a certain element of chance; but I think that has both practically and mathematically been proved to be so small as to be absolutely negligible.

1997. And as to the actual mathematical calculations which have to be carried out, do you think they would be a practical difficulty at a general election?—No, I do not think so, because I think it is so easy to give instructions to the presiding officers which could not fail to be understood.

1998. But from the presiding officer's point of view do you think he would always have at his command the men who could perform these calculations?—Certainly. In the offices of the local authorities there are plenty of men who have to do a great deal of work much more difficult and intricate than the counting of votes would be. I should like to point out, too, that in the election of parish councils—I live in a rural parish and I have been connected with parish councils and seen the working of a good number of parish council elections—you have the rural voter, who is supposed to be less quick, more conservative, and less educated, and he often has to vote for parish councils numbering up to 15 members, and there never is any difficulty. He marks the number of men he wants to vote for. The large size of the paper or list of candidates presents no more difficulty than when he votes for a member of Parliament, choosing one of two names on a paper.

1999. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) What county is this you are speaking of?—Surrey I speak of; but I know Hampshire very well too, in that respect.

2000. (*Chairman.*) Will you kindly give us your proposal with reference to the single members and the connection between the constituency and the member?—Especially in view of the tradition that we have in our electoral system at present when people constantly talk of "our member," meaning the member for their district, whether he is a man of their colour or not. I have thought out the proposal that it would be well, if you could, to combine that tradition with electoral areas of a larger extent, such as would be necessary for proportional representation. I should like to see the larger areas subdivided into what I should still call constituencies. Supposing there were five members to be elected for Wiltshire, I should divide Wiltshire into five constituencies. They would all poll together on a system of proportional representation, but, when the five members elected had been decided on by the counting of the votes, I would allow them to choose which of those five seats or five constituencies they would definitely represent. That would have this advantage, that a member, when he reached the House of Commons, would be named as representing the constituency for which he had elected to sit in the county for which he had been chosen. That tradition of the naming of members in that way in the House of Commons would thus be retained. Then in the case of a by-election, if one seat became vacant it would not be necessary to poll the whole county, but I should only poll that constituency for which the member who vacated his seat had sat. In that way you get over what I am sure many election agents and many other people feel is a very great difficulty of proportional representation; that is, if you have a by-election, are you to poll an area which perhaps sends 10 members to the House of Commons in order to elect one? The cost to a candidate, which in many constituencies now is over 1,000*l.*, would mean, if the whole of a large area have to poll, that in a by-election presumably the cost would run up to 10,000*l.* or so for one party merely trying to get one seat. Therefore, I think my proposal that if proportional representation was adopted and you had these large areas you should subdivide them into separate constituencies would be a very popular and very practical proposal.

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2001. Your suggestion is that in the order in which they come out on the poll they should have the choice of the particular area they represent?—Yes.

2002. Criticism has been pointed to this, that before an election takes place the candidates are unable to become acquainted with the constituency because the area is so large. Your scheme does not meet that?—Well, it does to a certain extent. For instance, supposing I am a Liberal and I am standing for Wiltshire, and supposing Wiltshire is to elect six members, I should arrange with the other Liberals that I should take, say, the western part of the county and specially cover that ground in the meetings and in the organisation, and my colleague would take the other part of the county, and naturally, if both he and I were elected, he would choose one seat in the part of the county in which he had been working, and I would choose one of the seats in the side of the county in which I had been working. I think from the point of view of electioneering and organising it makes it easier both for the candidates and for the public.

2003. As far as expenses are concerned, do you think your proposal would meet the objection that this scheme largely increases the cost?—I think it would. I think anything which tends to make a natural system of organising affairs in conjunction with others would tend to relieve the expense. But the expenses of electioneering, I suppose, will have to be reduced. It is a general feeling I think on all sides that the next Electoral Reform Bill ought to reduce the maximum scale to which candidates are allowed to go—and it would be very easy to do so I am sure, but that is a different question.

2004. Yes, I do not think that is before us. With regard to the double-member constituencies at present existing, are you in favour of retaining the two-member constituencies as at present, and the double vote?—As against dividing them—no, I am not. I think they do not give any additional right to the minority. I think, on the contrary, it is better to have a town divided into two single constituencies than to have it all massed. I think you may get two sides represented in that case, and I think it is very rarely the case that you get two sides represented in the double-barrelled constituencies, as they are called—or it is less frequently the case.

2005. Quite apart from any question of proportional representation, do you recommend in any case the abolition of the double-member constituencies?—Yes, I hope I have made my proposal of dividing the larger areas up quite clear, because I attach a great deal of importance to it, and I have laid it before friends who are practical politicians and electioneers, and I have always had it received very favourably, as a real way of meeting what otherwise would be a serious difficulty.

2006. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Might not it be better expressed by saying that instead of dividing your large area into constituencies you propose to group constituencies within a large area which would be a unit for the purposes of a general election but not for the purpose of by-elections, it comes to the same thing?—Yes, it does.

2007. That is your meaning?—That is my meaning; but when political parties are organising a district they have always got the general election more in view than anything else. I think perhaps it is a little more straightforward to put it the other way round; that is, my way I think is a little more clear; but I see the advantage of putting it as you do.

2008. I understand you are in favour of adopting the system of what is called the alternative or contingent vote to single-member constituencies in the case of three-cornered contests?—Yes.

2009. Would you make it compulsory to exercise the right of giving an alternative or contingent vote?—No.

2010. My reason for asking the question is that this system is in force in Western Australia and in Queensland, and it has been suggested authoritatively that it might be an improvement if the exercise of the right were made compulsory. Would you agree with that?—No, I should not be in favour of that. Say there

are three candidates, and a man marks his paper for A, and refuses to put his preference with regard to B or C. Now marking A only amounts to saying that he wishes B and C to be on equal terms as far as he is concerned. I think he has a right to say that if he likes. If it came to a vote, say, only between B and C, and he had absolutely no choice, he would perhaps not go to the poll. I think it would be undesirable to make the marking of preferences compulsory, because it takes away what is an intelligible and quite proper right of the elector.

2011. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) But then if he does not exercise his preference, what is the result as regards the election? Is the system worth trying at all?—Of course a great number would exercise their preferences. It might be worked on a mathematical principle by which you allowed so much for a first choice and so much for a second choice of candidate. Say you have three men to vote for; instead of counting one for the man who is first and for the present neglecting the other two, supposing you count three for the man who gets 1 marked opposite to his name, two for the man who get 2, and one for the man who gets the third preference. That system would be worth while introducing, because in that case you could mark one and a half for each of two men for neither of whom a preference was indicated. I do not know whether you quite see what I mean.

2012. I suppose you will agree that in the interests of simplicity these mathematical calculations are to be avoided if possible?—I do certainly. However, a system which would take account of the preferences at the first counting and not leave them only to be taken up in case no one candidate got a clear majority of votes has something to be said for it.

2013. I do not know whether you have in mind the form of penalty which has been suggested in the case of failure to exercise a preference. It is not fine or imprisonment. Do you know what it is?—No.

2014. It really means that the voter is disfranchised for the time being. Does that modify your view at all?—No, I do not think it does.

2015. You think it is just as bad that he should lose his right to vote?—Yes.

2016. You spoke of some newspapers just now. Did you mark whether, in their approval of proportional representation, any of them recommended its application to the special area in which each paper or any paper circulates?—No, I do not think I noticed that. I have a distinct recollection of certain localities in which they pointed out that if they had proportional representation at the present time they would not have one party practically disfranchised. I noticed that, I think, in connection with Manchester. The Manchester papers have pointed out that if at the last general election they had had proportional representation they would not have been without a single Conservative member.

2017. That is an expression of approval on the part of the minority, of course?—No, I think I have seen that point of view (speaking from mere memory) represented in Liberal papers too; I am thinking rather of the "Manchester Guardian," but I cannot be quite sure, speaking from memory.

2018. You have made a great personal study of this question. Have you mapped out in your mind any system of redistribution?—Yes, I have spent a good deal of time at it at one time or another. I am inclined to think that the county areas would make a very good guide.

2019. First, what would you do with Ireland?—With regard to Ireland, I should simply group together several counties, and I should make the constituencies as far as possible large, so as to give minorities, even though they are very small minorities, a chance to send a representative.

2020. Would you be content to divide the country into the four provinces?—I think that would be such a large area to cover, but I do not say that that would be at all a bad proposal.

2021. What would you do with Wales?—I should divide Wales probably into about four areas—two in

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the north and perhaps three in the south, because Glamorganshire itself is very densely populated.

2022. Having regard to the county boundaries?—As far as possible I should always follow the county boundaries. I think it would work in with local sentiment. You see we have county organisations in ecclesiastical matters. Ecclesiastical sees are largely county divisions. Then we have county divisions in judicial matters—assizes and quarter sessions cover county areas. We have it in the county council administration. We have it also, and I think it is an important point, in great local enthusiasm over cricket and football in connection with the counties. I think, taking the county areas, you would fit into local enthusiasm and well recognised bounds which people know so well already in other connections.

2023. But is not that form of enthusiasm closely linked to each county and not to grouped counties?—Not necessarily.

2024. You would not find any enthusiasm over the linking of Kent and Sussex together?—Both of them are so large that you would not have to link them. You would have to divide them. But you would, I think, find enthusiasm for linking together, say, Huntingdon and Cambridge, because they are bound together already. They are both eastern counties; they are both fen counties. There is a type of man, a type of character, and both have many interests which are common, which would make them quite naturally fall into line together.

2025. Have you considered the case of Yorkshire?—Yes, Yorkshire I should divide. The North Riding would have just 10 members. The West Riding south would have to be divided. It is entitled on the basis of proportional representation to about 20 members. I think it might be divided into two or three constituencies. The West Riding north would be divided into two, and the West Riding east into two.

2026. And then there are the more sparsely populated parts of Scotland?—I mentioned those, but I said there might be exceptional cases where you would have only one or two members to a large area. I should make an exception for Orkney and Shetland. Probably you would have to retain that as a single-member constituency, but I do not know.

2027. But you agree that it would be impossible in such a scheme to follow any process of uniformity?—Yes, in the size of a constituency certainly. That is why I said I should vary them between 10 and four members, and that is practically done in other countries. Belgium has no uniformity in the size of the constituencies.

2028. So that *quâ* redistribution it certainly would be a revolutionary project?—Yes, but it would be no more revolutionary than any other system of redistribution. The last Redistribution Bill that took Birmingham and made six or eight constituencies of it, and made eight at Liverpool, was as revolutionary as could be. I consider this would be less revolutionary, because the previous one simply carved out divisions in an arbitrary way; whereas by my proposal you respect old bounds as much as possible.

2029. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Would you merge the county boroughs?—I should in most cases merge the county boroughs in the areas around them. There are some cases where they are so distinct and large, take Bristol, for instance, or Sheffield, where you would not have to merge them in the counties round.

2030. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Would you be prepared to go at once into this great scheme of redistribution or would you advocate a tentative application of the Courtney system, say, to the cities in the first instance?—I am of a logical turn of mind, I suppose. I do not believe in trying experiments with one half of the country and not with the other half. I think if the principle of minority representation is good, it ought to be adopted by the nation as a whole.

2031. What section of thought do you expect to find represented under a system of minority representation which is not represented already?—I think you would get represented the type of man who is not a strong party man, but who carries a great deal of personal influence and local influence. I know Somerset

a little. I think the type of man who would tend to be retained would be Mr. Henry Hobhouse, for instance, who has just retired from Parliament, undoubtedly because he is more or less out of sympathy with both the great parties—he has belonged to each. That type of man who carries immense weight in his district, and who has done a great amount of public service is now, under our party system, more or less driven out.

2032. I quite appreciate that you would find from time to time very distinguished men who would come in as independent members, and who certainly would be ornaments to the House of Commons, but I wanted to know whether you felt there was any large section of the electorate which would find direct representation under such a system apart, say, from Unionists, Radicals, Labour Members, and Socialists?—No, I do not know that we should, except possibly we should get in some parts, for instance, the Welsh Churchmen. We have no Welsh Churchmen in the House of Commons. I think undoubtedly you would get some of the Church leaders in Wales—that is the Church of England as established in Wales.

2033. Half-a-dozen of them, perhaps?—I do not know how many, but you would get two or three. They have not got one at present. I think there are others that might come in. But I do not desire particularly to see strong sectional men. I want to see large wide-minded men who could claim to represent the public at large. I think the public at large and the average, not strong party-man is not represented.

2034. Do not you think, as a rule, such men would find a place in the party list formed by the leading parties?—No, I think they tend to get pushed out. Take the case of ———. He, I believe, was very anxious to get into Parliament, but being a Catholic and in favour of Denominational Schools he was offered to a good number of constituencies, but none of them would have him. I think it is a great pity that such a man is not in Parliament. I think that is the sort of man that would get in who has not a chance now, and who yet represents, undoubtedly, a very large section of the community.

2035. Then it is a question of degree as to the number?—On the party list of candidates now a man has to toe the line on every subject—too much so, I think.

2036. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) I see in the objections which you meet you take first of all the case of the party agents, and you say, I think, quite rightly, that all people prefer to work a system that they know. I think you said also that the agents fear that their activities would be less useful under your system?—I think they do feel that.

2037. Do you think the organisation would become rather less important or more important under your system?—It is rather hard to answer that. I think it would remain very important, but I think it would become less essential.

2038. Do not you think that with a large county constituency of three, or four, or five members, organisation is much more important than in a single-member county constituency, because of the area to get over and the difficulty of meetings?—I do not think it is more important than it is at present. I think it would have to be on different lines. Of course, in many constituencies at present, they are undoubtedly won by organisation where parties are very evenly balanced, and a party that can spend more on organisation, and that can work their organisation through really more efficient organisers, has a greater advantage, and is much more likely to win than the other, but I think that view and that aspect of organisation is less likely to be prominent in large areas.

2039. You do not think that the larger the area the more important the machine, because no single man who has not got a machine at his back can hope to win a seat in that big area?—I cannot follow that at all. I do not think so.

2040. Then you do not think that a strong organisation that knows where in this large area the party is weak and where it is strong will tell against the

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individual who has no organisation at his back?—No, I do not think it will.

2041. I should have thought it would. I should have thought that the larger the area the smaller is the effect of individual effort, and therefore the greater the force of organisation?—That is one way of looking at it, but I should look upon it very strongly in this way: A man who has established a reputation, and who has done something in public life, or who is known as a capable speaker, and a straightforward politician, will get a reputation over a large area, and it is just those qualities which in a small area which is organised by house-to-house visitation, and so on, do not tell for what they are really worth. I cannot conceive, for instance, if we had proportional representation, with large county divisions, any constituency in which Lord Hugh Cecil should put up, and in which he would not be elected. I should say he would be elected in every constituency, and yet at the present time it is almost absolutely impossible for him to get in anywhere in any constituency.

2042. But are not you taking rather the exceptional case? I think you are taking the case of an exceptional man, and comparing that man with the average. Surely on the average all over the run of candidates, the man who has got the organisation at his back is the man who will win the seat?—I do not think that would be so in the proposed system. I have thought it out, and will go into it further if you like, but I am confident it is not so. As I say, I have had experience in organisation and political work in constituencies for 30 years.

2043. It is a very important point because it bears upon the point of selection of members. I see in your memorandum you lay great stress on the character of the member that you will obtain by this system?—Yes. I think it is obvious that if a party wants to win, say, four seats in Wiltshire, they are bound to get not only men who are known as good landlords or generous subscribers to charities in one quarter of the county, but men who can make a fair impression over a large area.

2044. I quite see that is one side of it, but do not you think also that in those areas attention must be paid to local and sectional interests, and therefore the list of party candidates for a county like Wiltshire must include people whose interests are sectional and local?—I do not see it quite, for this reason: supposing Wiltshire has six members, no party would probably run more than four men or expect to get more than four seats, and its success in getting four seats—which would represent a large majority, comparatively speaking, of the number—would rest upon its being able to appeal to more than merely sectional interests. It must appeal to the mass of the people as a whole, because sectional interests only exist in certain places.

2045. But certain interests exist in all places?—Yes, but then they are not sectional.

2046. You do not think they would run one candidate for the publicans' vote, and one candidate for the Church vote, and so on?—No, I do not think so.

2047. And you think that the party organiser who, after all, has a large say in these things, would not insist that a certain amount of deference should be paid to the sectional interests in that way?—He might, and of course there are some interests which are so well organised and so wide awake that they will never allow any chance to go by. I am quite sure, for instance, the brewing trade will never be caught napping.

2048. That is very important, because the danger that has been referred to in your system is that it tends to the formation of groups that are formed on sectional lines, and not on national lines. Do you feel that danger?—No, I do not. May I just take up your last point again? You referred to the influence of the brewing and the Church parties. Is it not the case that at present no candidate anywhere in the Unionist party has much chance unless he will placate the brewing interest?

2049. There are some temperance members in the Unionist party?—They practically do not count when it comes to voting in the House of Commons.

2050. There are a few?—There were very few Unionists in the case of the Licensing Bill last year—it is ancient history now—who really ventured to go to the length of supporting it. I think you would get that body of opinion better represented.

2051. You think that in the big area the sectional interest has a smaller effect the bigger the area?—Exactly.

2052. Then you referred to the party system, and I think you said you thought it was coming to an end?—Yes, I do not want to prophesy quite so much as that. I think it is going to be weakened and have less chance of continuing to exist in its present form.

2053. And you look to the formation of groups?—Yes.

2054. Do you think that is a good sign or a bad sign?—On the whole I think it is a good sign, because I think the groups will be reasonable. I think the groups at the present time have tended to be very unreasonable. There are groups in Parliament now.

2055. You do not fear what you call in one part of your evidence the corrupt and cynical bargains with the different groups?—No, because I think if they took place inside Parliament after an election, they would be so resented that those who were guilty of them would suffer at the next election, and I think there would soon be a tradition established against them.

2056. Still there would be a great temptation to bargain in groups. That, surely, is the condition of all group systems?—Yes, there is that existing at the present time to a certain extent, surely.

2057. Then do not you think there would be some loss of continuity? You might have a sudden swing, and re-crystallisation of groups, and a sudden change on important questions of policy?—That is possible; but I think that would be counteracted by there being so much less swing of the pendulum in the actual composition of Parliament. I think you would never have a change from 100 majority on one side to 200 majority on the other side within a few weeks, as we have seen lately. I think it would so obviate or modify the danger.

2058. Sir Francis Hopwood asked you about re-distribution. You do see the difficulty of a very large area in the counties?—Yes.

2059. At present a member has to hold, say, 100 or 120 meetings in a year in a single-member constituency, and if you come to three-member constituencies it would be perfectly impossible that any members could work the same system that we have now?—Of course a different system cannot be worked in the same way as an old system, but I see no difficulty in the change, and I believe on the whole most men would welcome the change because it would mean that they would only visit the most important places.

2060. But are not you then in this difficulty, that if they do that they are more likely to be beaten by somebody who neglects the important work of politics and spends his whole time in nursing this important constituency?—I do not think so at all.

2061. You do not think an elector votes for the man who comes and sees him and shakes his hand?—No, I do not think so.

2062. Do not you think that happens now?—I have been a candidate myself who has nursed a constituency and been beaten, and for one reason or another I attach very much less importance than is often attached to the actual nursing.

2063. I think also you under-estimate the difficulties, on local grounds, of grouping counties together. You mentioned the case of Tyneside as a fit spot for grouping. I suppose you meant the course of the Tyne—all the big industrial points along the Tyne?—No, I meant the Tyneside Division. I think the County Division round Newcastle-on-Tyne is called the Tyneside Division.

2064. Yes, on the north side of the Tyne it is, but my point is, that although you have the same conditions on both sides of the Tyne, you have a very strong local patriotism dividing the north and the south of the Tyne, and any grouping there would be most bitterly opposed. I give that as an example of the difficulties that I should have thought were bound to occur. Do

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not you think that they are rather great?—I think the Boundary Commission, which would, I presume, be appointed in the case of redistribution, should have instructions to meet these opinions as far as possible and consider them. I do not see that they are any greater than difficulties which must arise in any case of redistribution. On the contrary, I think the larger you make the divisions the more you will be able to meet these difficulties, and less petty and less numerous will be the questions on throwing a district or a parish or a town into this division or that.

2065. Do not you think the smaller the area the

finer the shades of local opinion you might meet?—No, because you are bound, I suppose, to keep to county divisions.

2066. As divisions?—It has never been proposed yet to make a single-member constituency of part of one county and part of another, and I do not suppose it ever would be.

2067. Do not you think that if you stick to single-member constituencies you can fall in with local conditions of patriotism more easily than with a multiple-member constituency?—No, frankly, I do not. I think the reverse,

The witness withdrew.

Mr. H. M. HYNDMAN called and examined.

2068. (Chairman.) You are chairman of the Social Democratic party?—No, we have no chairman.

2069. You are a member of that party?—I am a member of it.

2070. For a considerable number of years past you have taken a very active part in public affairs?—Yes.

2071. You have been good enough to send us a memorandum stating your views on the subject of our inquiry. Will you allow us to put that memorandum in as evidence?—Certainly; it is a brief summary.

The memorandum was handed in, and is as follows:—

SUMMARY.

1. Our political institutions are fully 100 years behind our economic and social development.

2. It is scarcely disputed that our existing system of conducting political elections is about as bad as it can be. Even those who are most anxious to maintain our present political forms cannot deny that the English method of choosing and voting for a candidate is calculated to produce results directly opposed to every principle of fair representation.

3. As matters stand our electoral arrangements are costly to the individual candidates, thus, especially in large and poor constituencies, unduly favouring rich men; they encourage canvassing, canvassing, and indirect corruption in the shape of local subscriptions, charitable donations, gifts of coal and blankets, &c.; they foster local excitement, increase individual expenditure, and force into excessive prominence the personality of the candidates; they frequently give unreasonable importance to local and purely sectional issues as opposed to matters of great national concern; they render the representation of a constituency by a member polling only a minority of the votes cast increasingly probable; and they make the representation of an active and growing but unpopular minority extremely difficult of attainment.

4. Furthermore, it is now universally recognised that the change of a comparatively small percentage of the total number of votes polled at a general election from one side to the other under present conditions may, as shown by the last two Parliaments, convert a great majority into a small and ineffective minority in the House of Commons, thus reducing the entire national administration to the level of a huge political gamble; while the frequent recurrence of bye-elections, when all the elements of political passion and prejudice are concentrated on a small area for several weeks in succession, conduces neither to the national dignity nor to the public enlightenment.

5. Apart, therefore, altogether from questions of extension of the suffrage, payment of members, and election expenses out of public funds, the suppression of plural voting, &c., there is a general opinion that better political machinery is required in order to give adequate expression to the various views of the electorate. It is no longer only the members of minorities who claim that their right to direct representation should in some way be

secured, but even the great parties themselves feel that reforms in the methods of electing members are immediately called for.

6. Only one proposal has at all held its own as a substantial improvement of the existing procedure against the various plans of proportional representation. This is the second ballot. But the second ballot has of late been discredited with advanced parties and minorities in general, owing, more particularly, to the results of the last general election in Germany, when, by a combination between all the other parties against them at the second ballot, the Social Democrats, who, on any fair basis of representation, would be entitled to have not less than one-third of the members of the Reichstag, were left actually in possession of only one-eighth of the seats. It has been conclusively proved, therefore, that the second ballot does not prevent most unfair representation, while it tends towards unscrupulous combinations and injurious compromises during and even after the elections.

7. The two plans of proportional representation which have been most discussed and are most widely understood are the well-known Hare or Andrae scheme, and the Belgian scheme, both of which have been fully laid before the Commission. Speaking broadly, the former gives prominence to personal representation while not excluding political combinations; the latter favours political combinations while not excluding personal preference.

8. The Social Democratic Party in this country considers the latter plan by far the better of the two on the grounds that it has a greater tendency to bring principles to the front as against persons or mere political catch-words; that it does away almost entirely with mere factious agitation and substitutes continuous educational propaganda for fitful appeals to popular passion and prejudice; that it secures for the electorate a wider national outlook over the whole political situation; and that it ensures a continuity of the voluntary party discipline and management in place of the pecuniary causus manipulation and rigid official dictation which now too often prevail. That specially popular personalities, or even men of high political attainments, will probably have less direct power under these arrangements than they have now is an incident which may have its advantages as well as its drawbacks.

9. In Belgium and Finland, where proportional representation prevails in constituencies that formerly existed, and only in some cases have been combined, this system, though differing considerably in the two nations, has produced good results. In Belgium in particular it seems quite certain that it has helped to avert desperate sectional antagonisms, to obtain a much fairer representation of bitterly opposed factions without occasioning any friction, and that nobody wishes to return to the old chaotic methods.

10. For Great Britain and Ireland, the Social Democratic Party therefore favour the plan whereby each party or faction, having established

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its claim to proportional representation, should issue its own lists for England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland separately. The whole election would then, of course, take place on one day. Each elector would have one vote and one vote only. He or she could vote either for an entire list or for one candidate on that list. Each party would place its candidates on its own list in the order in which the party itself desired them to be elected. The total number of votes polled divided by the number of seats in the House of Commons would give the requisite quota for each candidate. The repartition of votes polled would proceed on the cumulative system to the candidates as placed in succession on the party list, regardless of whether one of the lower placed candidates polled more votes than the first in order or not, until the quotas were made up for as many candidates as the total vote cast for its nominees entitled the party or faction to claim.

11. In this way the voting power of the three kingdoms would be proportionally and equitably adjusted with automatic precision among voters of all shades of opinion.

12. There is nothing in such a method of voting to prevent the due representation of counties, cities, or districts, supposing this special representation to be desirable, but the effect undoubtedly would be to give a far wider outlook to the electorate than now is afforded. National, international, and social issues of permanent importance would take precedence of questions of mere passing interest. The great extension of local and municipal authority of late years also fully justifies such an extension of national proportional representation, the necessity for local representation in Parliament being much less than it was on that account.

13. Voting, in the opinion of the Social Democratic Party, should be made compulsory upon all electors. The number of members in the House of Commons should be very greatly reduced.

14. Contested bye-elections would be avoided by the replacement of the retiring member by the next non-elected candidate on the list of his party at the previous general election.

15. That proportional representation would result in an extension of the number of groups in the national assembly is quite probable. But the formation of groups has already begun under the existing plan of voting, and everything goes to show that the two-party see-saw form of government is gradually coming to an end in any case.

16. The Social Democratic Party has put forward candidates for the House of Commons during the past twenty-five years, and has polled many thousands of votes. At the last general election two Social Democratic candidates only standing for two adjacent constituencies in Lancashire polled just upon 10,000 votes. Such a poll cast in some other districts would have sufficed to secure the return of five or even more members to the House of Commons. Yet the party still has not a single direct representative in the House of Commons. If proportional representation had been in force there would, if the party funds sufficed to pay the heavy fines levied in this country for public service, be at least 20 Social Democrats in the national assembly at the present time. One reason for this change would be that with proportional representation voters would no longer be afraid of throwing their votes away by voting for a good candidate whom they think has no chance.

17. The Social Democratic Party considers that the initiative and referendum on the Swiss system, or some modification of it, constitute a necessary complement to proportional representation.

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2072. I gather from your memorandum which we have before us that you consider our political institutions obsolete?—I do,

2073. And the method of conducting elections very unsatisfactory?—That is my view.

2074. In your investigations what direction do you consider reform should take?—In the main, proportional representation. Taking roughly a single instance which is working close at hand, I should think the best at present is the Belgian system, but I do not consider it perfect.

2075. You consider, first of all, that the present system lends itself to great abuse?—In every direction, I think, and great misrepresentation too.

2076. You attach great importance to the fact that a small percentage of voters may very largely influence the complexion of Parliament?—I think it is a very disastrous result.

2077. Whereas a small number transferred from one side to the other may make a very large difference in the majority?—It has done so quite recently.

2078. Do you consider that the minority or collection of minorities does not obtain due proportional representation?—I do not think it obtains a general representation at all except by bargaining of an improper character, to my mind.

2079. You admit that there is hardly any considerable section of thought which has not its representation in the House of Commons?—I should scarcely say that, even, except by compromise, to which I object. We have only one man who represents us at all in the House, and he has only got there by compromise. After all, though we may not be a considerable section in thought, we are a very considerable section in numbers.

2080. In any case under a proportional scheme you would be entitled to more representatives and direct representatives?—Undoubtedly.

2081. You do not attach any importance to the retention of a large majority by the Government of the day?—No, I do not. I should prefer to see it very nicely balanced.

2082. You do not consider that that would put great difficulties in the way of the executive?—That, I think, raises another question, if I may say so. The question of the executive might be another affair. I would like to see a strong executive, thoroughly supported by a democratic vote.

2083. You refer in your memorandum in the first instance to the scheme of the second ballot. I gather you are not in favour of that?—No, I was, but I have entirely abandoned it.

2084. You consider that it lends itself to abuse and rather unscrupulous combination of different parties?—There are so many marked instances of that. Take the present Premier of France, for example, who was knocked out of the representation of the Var by agreement between the Socialists and the Catholics, and I consider that was a most nefarious combination.

2085. You do not recommend the second ballot being adopted in this country?—No, certainly not, according to recent experience.

2086. The two plans which you refer to in your memorandum are the Hare scheme and the Belgian scheme?—Yes.

2087. Do I gather you would like to adopt the Hare system in its entirety in this country?—No, I would rather adopt the other, but I would rather have the Hare scheme than go on as we are.

2088. You would have the whole country one large constituency?—I propose the country should be divided into England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, and the voting should take place in those large areas.

2089. But, as a practical politician, do you consider that is a scheme which is worth advocating?—I do advocate it. I have heard of so many unpractical schemes that afterwards turned out to be practical that I do not know that that would affect me very much.

2090. You do not feel very sanguine?—I do feel very sanguine about it. I think the jumble existing at present is preparing men's minds for a more complete transformation than is at present comprehended, perhaps.

2091. Admitting the desirability of the Hare scheme, would you be prepared to accept modifications

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of it as a first step?—In the direction of more complete organisation. I think it gives too much importance to the personality. That is the objection to the Hare scheme, I think.

2092. Do you think Parliament would be composed largely of well-known, influential men? Who might have not sufficient party connection?—I think that is a danger that might arise, and I think it might likewise admit of an extension to "cranks."

2093. You think the faddist would have undue prominence?—I venture to think that that might be likely. It seems so to me.

2094. You have heard that in evidence given before us, many people consider the independent member is a great desirability?—But if you had them all independent members it would be rather a chaos.

2095. Have you studied the scheme drawn up by the Proportional Representation Society—Lord Courtney's scheme?—I have.

2096. Does that commend itself to you?—I think it is better than anything, except the one we prefer.

2097. As a first step, would you be prepared to accept that?—It really is in opposition to our idea, only I think it is preferable to the present system, but I prefer the Party scheme, as it may be called, as opposed to the Personal scheme—that is speaking broadly.

2098. Have you studied the working of that scheme in Belgium?—Yes, I have studied the Belgian scheme. I think I understand that.

2099. Do you consider it has worked fairly successfully?—I think it has worked very successfully. I think it has not improbably averted, I will not say civil war, but something approaching to it, under very difficult conditions.

2100. It combines the voting for a list of candidates, and also the giving of a preference to an individual on that list?—Yes.

2101. Does it occur to you that that must necessarily give great prominence to the party organiser who draws up the list?—But I not think that the party organiser will draw up the list under a proper democratic system. I think the party itself will do it under the conditions that I hope to see, and that we endeavour to bring about in the party to which I belong, in other countries and in this: the reference would be entirely to the body of the constituents. There must be some organiser, no doubt, but that organiser is under very strict control.

2102. The tendency, no doubt, nowadays is for all parties to become more democratic in their constitution?—I presume it is so. I see not so much evidence of it as I should like to see.

2103. So the influence of the party "boss" or wire-puller, you think, will be less in future than at present?—Under proportional representation, I feel certain it would not matter what form of organisation you had.

2104. Would you be prepared to say that it is considerable nowadays?—I am prepared to say at the present moment it is almost dominant.

2105. You do not think that the actual list which would have to be prepared would give great power to such individuals?—I do not think it would. I think the party, as a whole, holds the view that the party itself knows which are the best men suited for Parliament. It does not follow, for example, that a man who is a particularly good orator is an influential and good man in the House of Commons when it comes to deal with such questions as mining difficulties, and so forth. I think we should choose men for practical work rather than for their oratorical faculty.

2106. Is it an objection to the Belgian system that the list may contain names which are not altogether popular, and may add the unpopular candidate to the popular one?—I cannot conceive, as the party is organised in Belgium—which I know pretty well—how any man who has not obtained the confidence of his political friends could get nomination. He may not be popular in the sense of great popularity on occasion. He may not be a M. Van der Velde or a M. Anseele, or anything of that kind. Take, for example, one man who is at present a senator, and who has shown very great power in connection with the mining difficulties there. I think his ability and knowledge of the facts would have obtained him a leading position in the party

under any circumstances, though he does not pretend to be a particularly popular man.

2107. Has the result in Belgium given due proportion to the minorities?—I cannot say exactly due proportion, but a very much better proportion than before.

2108. Of course, the circumstances were peculiar in Belgium?—Very peculiar and very dangerous.

2109. You cannot say that any such circumstances exist in this country?—The circumstances do not exist in exactly the same way, but the unfairness of voting exists to even a greater extent.

2110. I understand there are great religious animosities in Belgium?—There are.

2111. They have not been greatly lessened by the adoption of this system?—The animosities are not lessened, but the expression of them has been mollified.

2112. Do you consider that under any of these schemes greater or less interest will be taken in politics?—I think greater interest—not so fitful, but much more continuous and capable.

2113. Would the character of men coming forward for Parliament be improved or the reverse?—I think it would be improved, because wealth would count for less.

2114. Do you think that the character of politicians would become less political, and that, in other words, professional politicians would not be so prominent?—I think they would not be nearly so prominent; and I think there is something else, and that is, that a man would be speaking for his whole party instead of speaking for himself, in any contest which occurred, and it would not be so personal a matter.

2115. In your list system, would it be possible for the independent man, who would have to stand by himself, to obtain representation?—Not in the party to which I belong. We should not care about men we could not rely upon.

2116. But what about the actually independent candidate? Lord Hugh Cecil has been frequently referred to as an instance?—He might get a sufficient number of men all over the country to give him votes, and if he got the quota he would be elected, I presume.

2117. In actual working, do you consider the List system easier than the single transferable vote?—Yes, I do.

2118. It presents less difficulties?—I think it presents less difficulties. I think it presents very little, if any, difficulty. There is a certain amount of adding on of votes from one to another, but it does not amount to anything serious.

2119. Experience in Belgium has shown that it works easily?—It works easily. There is considerable delay in the announcement of the result of the election, which does away with some of the excitement that otherwise would occur, and I do not know that that is at all disadvantageous.

2120. Great stress has been laid on the connection between the member and the constituency in evidence which has come before us. Do you attach any importance to that?—I do not. I think there would be quite sufficient local connection anyhow. There would be men in the House who came from all parts of the country, and any special proposal that had to be put forward would be put forward by those individuals, irrespective of whether they particularly represented that section of the country or not. In point of fact, I think there is too much localism at present.

2121. But if there is a large area, how is the candidate to make himself acquainted with the electors, or give them an opportunity of hearing his views?—Under the present system, where local administration is so largely extended as it is to-day, I think Parliament is cumbered up too much already by local considerations, and what we wish to do is to relieve the House of Commons from those matters and give it more time for the general administration of the affairs of the country at large.

2122. But for a candidate to make his views known to those whom he hopes to be his constituents, would you rely entirely on the press?—Some of the men, for example, whom we should think, perhaps, most valuable would not be men who are particularly good on the

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platform. The platform, in my opinion, counts for too much to-day, and the purse counts for much more. Those two influences we want, as far as possible, to reduce to their proper proportions.

2123. I take it you do not attach much importance to the local feeling of any particular place for its member?—I do not, personally. That is only a matter of personal opinion.

2124. In paragraph 10 of your memorandum, you say: "For Great Britain and Ireland the Social Democratic Party therefore favour the plan whereby each party or fraction having established its claim to proportional representation." What do you mean by "having established its claim to proportional representation"?—I think you ought to show that you are at least able by your votes on local boards, and the like, to appeal to something like a reasonable proportion of the electorate, whatever that proportion may eventually be agreed to be. I do not think any particular set of three or four or five men are entitled to come forward and put the country to the expense of recording their views all over the place simply because they hold them. I think you have to get to a certain point before you are at liberty to come forward; but I think, if you can show you have (say) 10,000 people under any organisation to vote for you, they are entitled to have one man, just as was said just now about Lord Hugh Cecil.

2125. How would that be ascertained?—That would be a matter to be considered.

2126. You have not any concrete proposal?—We have not any concrete proposal for deciding how that is to be brought about; but I do not think it is beyond the wit of man to devise such a plan.

2127. But it would have to be some official or recorded information?—Some agreed proportion of the various parties that are going to contest the various seats.

2128. The mere fact that a party may consist of several prominent men would not entitle them to that qualification?—I do not see why it should entitle them to it more than people who are not prominent.

2129. That hardly removes the grievance of the small section who would not obtain that qualification?—Of course there will always be some injustice in any form of representation. You can only do what is on broad lines fair to the whole people. You cannot represent every faction which grows up. For example, we are not represented now; but there was a time when we should not have contended that we were entitled to do anything more than put forward propaganda candidatures.

2130. You would arrive at the quota by dividing the total number of recorded votes by the number of seats?—I would.

2131. You would distribute the seats in proportion as they voted?—Yes, and take them up from one to another until the full amount had been obtained.

2132. You say you would proceed on the cumulative system?—Cumulative in the sense that, supposing the man who was put at the head of the list had 10,000 votes as a quota, and he only obtained 8,000, we should take as many from those below as were necessary to make up his 10,000, irrespective of how many those below him polled, because his position in the list elected is a matter for the party to decide.

2133. Does that quite do away with any element of chance?—I think so, as far as you can do away with the element of chance in anything. Supposing that the party can poll 400,000 or 500,000 votes, and 10,000 is the quota, I do not see how you can prevent it, under this system, from getting 40 seats.

2134. But take the four kingdoms; you separate England from Wales for this purpose?—Yes, and I put Ireland separately.

2135. You would not suggest making any subdivision of England—north and south, for instance? No, I do not see why that should be done.

2136. The practical conduct of such an election, you think, is not insuperable?—I do not see why it should be. I do not see why a large area should be more difficult to poll than a small one if all the election takes place on one day. With one person one vote you would

have the polling centres all over the country, and I do not see why that should be any objection whatever.

2137. In any system such as this there must be long delay between the polling day and the result being made known?—Yes, a considerable delay, and I do not know that that would constitute any serious objection, because even now there is a long delay between the first poll and the last county poll.

2138. You do not think there would be more inconvenience than now?—I do not think there would be any increase of inconvenience.

2139. Your next recommendation is that all voting should be made compulsory?—You cannot prevent a man or woman spoiling his or her voting paper.

2140. Would you attach any penalty to non-compliance with this?—I should attach a penalty. I do not think it need be a heavy one, but I do think there ought to be a penalty, because otherwise I do not see how you could compel. I think it is very important that everybody who is entitled to a vote should exercise it. I have seen, for instance, in a school board election for London such a thing as not half of the voters polling.

2141. You would not think the mere disqualification would be sufficient?—No, I do not think it would be sufficient, because I think then you nullify what you are trying to do.

2142. You say that your system would do away with the necessity for bye-elections?—In the way we suggest, because the next candidate on the party list would take the place of the one who had been in any way removed.

2143. You do not attach any importance to any change of opinion. The next one on the party list might possibly change his views?—The party would know of such change, and would appoint the next man upon whom it could rely.

2144. You then refer to the extension of groups. Do you consider that desirable or undesirable?—Well, it is taking place now. I do not think it is a question upon which we can argue as to its desirability. Personally, I do not think there is any objection to it, but it is a change you have to take account of, because you see it in every country. It is more advanced in other countries than here but it is coming here very rapidly.

2145. And this plan of yours would accelerate it?—I think it would somewhat.

2146. In your opinion that is no disadvantage?—I do not think so.

2147. Do you consider that under this scheme you would get if you polled 10,000 votes your fair share of representation?—Absolutely. I do not see how we can avoid it.

2148. Assuming that this scheme of yours is too complex and difficult to be carried through at once, would you be prepared to support a modification of it such as Lord Courtney's scheme?—Certainly. That is not a modification. I think it is entirely different. I think Lord Courtney's proposals are intended to secure the representation of minorities and also to secure the representation of capable men of reputation almost irrespective of their unpopularity among the majority of the electorate. Certainly I think that is very far better than the present system. I am only supporting this particular form because I think it will tend to do away with the personal element, which I think is rather objectionable, especially on a large field like Imperial politics.

2149. Supposing it is advisable to alter the existing system, would you be prepared to have the alternative vote in those contests where more than two candidates stand for one single-member constituency?—Yes. I do not care about the alternative vote. I prefer the plain issue very much, as I have said already, because I think it is much simpler and much more conclusive; but at the same time I am so anxious to get rid of the present system that any change at all that was in the nature of proportional representation I should welcome.

2150. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) I understand that if the system which you prefer—the Belgian system—were to be adopted the whole of England would be a

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single constituency?—That is what I should like to see.

2151. Then the party list for England would be a pretty long one?—It would be as long as the number of seats we thought, on calculation, we could reasonably hope to get, or, if the present position continues of having to pay for them, that we could pay for.

2152. The larger parties would try to capture as many seats as they could. How many seats would you allot to England?—According to the proportion of population.

2153. I see you say that you would reduce largely the number of members in the House of Commons. How long would such a list for England be?—I should like to see a House of Commons which had not more than 300 members.

2154. So that there might be, roughly, a list of 200 members for England?—Yes, something like that.

2155. That would be a much longer list than any of the Belgian lists?—Yes, because the country is so very much larger, but I do not see that that matters if the parties or groups are sufficiently clearly divided.

2156. How do you think in practice the party lists would be made up for England?—As far as our list is concerned?

2157. You know how your own would be made up?—I cannot speak about others. Our own list would be made up simply by a vote of the whole party.

2158. Can you hazard a conjecture as to how the other lists would be made up?—I think they would certainly put in their best men, and I do not think mere wealth, for example, and mere expense of contesting a seat would carry the same amount of weight that it does under the present conditions. You would have, I think, on the whole, men chosen more for what they were likely to do and the service they would be likely to render than the question of whether they could foot the bills or not, which is often a consideration at the present time.

2159. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) You say that you want to see more political influences at work and less personal ones and that is why you support this system?—Largely, yes.

2160. You think if you had a single constituency of all England you would exclude the personal element altogether?—Yes, to a very large extent. I think you would be arguing for the principles of the party, and not arguing for your personal position.

2161. You do not think the man who had a great platform reputation or a brilliant pen, and who was not of necessity a good man of business in politics, would gain an unfair advantage?—I do not think he would. I think, on the contrary, he would to a very large extent find his level. The greater part of the work of politics, as everybody knows, is done behind the scenes, and those who do it do not get any credit for it.

2162. But still, it is the Press that makes the reputation of a politician?—To a very large extent, but it may come by a mere accident outside the Press. The Press only reports what is done, after all, and sometimes it unmakes a man's reputation by such reporting.

2163. Then under your system you suggest that a party should choose its own list of candidates for England—say 150 or 200—and should put those forward?—Yes.

2164. That relegates the election to a previous process. That is of very great importance. The party's selection is very important for the individual?—Very important indeed.

2165. You do not think that in the party lists personal considerations are almost bound to weigh very heavily?—I think they do weigh, but I do not think they will weigh so much when it comes to a question of putting forward principles, as it does where you have to fight a constituency in which popularity tells so very largely.

2166. But taking our present conditions and the dependence of all parties on money, do not you think that they must pay attention to big subscribers when they make up their list. All parties must do the same,

surely?—Well, in our case that would not be so, certainly.

2167. It is a danger?—Yes, it is a danger. There is always a danger of bribery and corruption under any form of voting. I do not see how you can obviate that danger altogether.

2168. But are not you increasing that danger and increasing the force of wealth?—We have so little among us that it never occurred to us, I am bound to say. That really is the fact, as far as we are concerned. We are permanently "hard-up," and it has never occurred to us that we shall ever be otherwise.

2169. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) You suggested that a House of Commons of 300 members would probably be a great improvement on the present House?—Yes.

2170. I may say I cordially agree with that view; but even with a House of that size, under your list system and huge constituencies the number of members elected by England would be about 215, let us say, out of the 300?—Would it be as much as that?

2171. Something like that—call it 200. You have had very considerable experience of what is called in common cant the "average elector" of this country?—Yes, I think so.

2172. I suppose very few men are better able to gauge the intelligence of the average elector than you are?—I will not say that, but I have met them under various forms.

2173. It was stated here the other day by a very experienced political agent that there are quite a large number of electors in this country who are so ignorant, so utterly and so unintelligently ignorant, that they do not know the name of the present Prime Minister. Should you agree with that estimate?—I think there are certain places that I could take you to where that would be so.

2174. Do you really think that in the case of a population in which this considerable element of people are approaching that level of ignorance, you could work an election where 200 members would be candidates for one constituency?—I do not see why that should apply more to the proposal that is now being submitted than to the present system. I can show you boroughs here in London which the man who will spend enough on coals and blankets to win, will carry almost to a certainty. That is a question of the poverty of the people and their ignorance.

2175. That is scarcely a question of intelligence entirely, but a question, of course, of their wretched, miserable poverty, which makes them the victims of that?—The two, more or less, go together, unfortunately. If you take a poverty-stricken district in any part of London or any other great centre, you will usually find ignorance predominates. I think the two go together, unfortunately, under our system of society to-day. What you mean to say is, would it not be impossible to bring home to these people the importance of the issue for which they are asked to vote?

2176. To make them form any approximate estimate of the qualities and the claims of the men on the enormous list put before them?—But that is our business.

2177. Do you think that, in the present state of ignorance and apathy, it is practicable to have that system?—I do not see that it is less practicable than the present system.

2178. The present system has enormous disadvantages, but they are not of that kind. Surely the average elector can form some sort of estimate of two or three candidates in one constituency?—Yes, but we are not arguing from my point of view. We are arguing, not from the question of the personalities of those who are before the constituencies, but the question of the principles the various parties are representing. Supposing it were a very poor constituency, such as the one we contested not long ago, every street corner would be pervaded by people preaching, at any rate, their own principles, however well or badly they did it. That is what we reckon upon. What we think would be advantageous is that we should be preaching our principles all the time throughout the country, as we do to-day, with a view

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to making a certainty of a proportionate election coming our way.

2179. That is exactly what I thought you would say. Now I want to come to two more points. First of all, would you ask men to vote for a policy rather than for a certain number of individuals with this, that, or the other personal character?—Certainly, absolutely.

2180. Then, practically, you are asking for a system under which men will vote for lists of men representing a policy?—Certainly.

2181. Men accredited by their party organisation?—That is what I want to see, they being the best judges as to the men who will best administer or advocate their principles.

2182. I do not mean to say that is necessarily bad, but it is something entirely different from what we have now?—Yes, but, if you are going to change at all, I want you to change to something I believe in.

2183. You speak of the active party propaganda that would be carried on in the highways and byeways. Under such a system as that every party would be out preaching everywhere its own policy; but surely under such a system as that a really great orator would be a great asset to a party?—He would be under any circumstances to any party, surely.

2184. But he would be especially a great asset if you had to appeal to the whole of England to vote for a single policy, and for a list representing that policy. Supposing that you put at the head of that list a man of speaking qualities—a John Bright or a Mr. Gladstone, or even a Mr. Joseph Chamberlain—surely he would be an enormous asset to a list of a party?—Not more than Mr. Gladstone was in his Midlothian campaign, I judge.

2185. But a little while ago I rather gathered you said that this system would lead to men being picked for other than oratorical qualities?—Quite so. I have such a view in connection with our party at the present moment. I do not think it follows that the list would be drawn up in regard to their oratorical capacity; in fact I am absolutely certain it would not. The party owns numbers of men really doing excellent work who are never known to the public at all; but they would be on that list for their services.

2186. It would be a very courageous thing for the party and a very excellent thing, but do not you think that the party advisers and managers—I do not mean the party agents, but the people who more or less direct and advise the parties—would, if they could, first secure men who could make an appeal to the mass of the people?—There would be two or three sections. There would be the party orators undoubtedly upon the list, because it would be advantageous to have a man arguing on behalf of a whole list instead of arguing for himself personally, and his oratory would not be less valuable on that account. Then there would be those known to be exceedingly valuable to the party on other grounds than mere oratory—organisers and so forth; they would form a portion of that list. I do not myself believe that mere oratory will count so much with an organised party list. Of course a man may have two faculties; he may be a good organiser and a good orator too, and a good man all round, and I do not think in that case anything would keep him down.

2187. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Your system would be one under which the elector would be asked to vote for the ticket and not for the man?—That is so. I would call it rather voting for the principle than for the person.

2188. In popular phrase that is so?—Yes.

2189. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) See what that would lead to. What I have been driving at is that it seems to me, after listening to you, that personal character, ability, popularity, and eloquence would probably count rather more under your system than they count now, and wealth would count probably a great deal less?—Personal character would count more unquestionably.

2190. You spoke of the forming of groups and of the disadvantageous results of group bargaining in case of the second ballot particularly. You are familiar with the position in Germany?—I am very familiar with it.

2191. You know how the Social Democrats have been cut out there under the group system?—I do.

2192. You are aware of the present financial position in Germany?—Yes.

2193. You told us that, on the whole, you thought the coming in of groups here would not be a bad thing?—You are taking, I venture to say, a little different line. What happened in Germany, as you are perfectly well aware, was that, on the second ballot more particularly, everybody else sunk their differences in order to sink us.

2194. To cut out the Social Democrats?—Yes.

2195. But I gather from you that, on the whole, you do not look forward to the accentuating of groups here with any alarm, but, on the contrary, you think it would be a better state of things than you get now—that the groups would bargain in Parliament or elsewhere—but it would not be a bad thing?—I do not think it would.

2196. You know what the groups are doing in Germany now. You have read the Chancellor's recent speeches, and so forth?—Yes.

2197. Do you think that is a very ideal state of things?—But at the present time in Germany we have nothing in the shape of proportional representation at all.

2198. But you have groups?—Yes, but groups in proportional representation to their strength and groups like the Catholic party—twice as strong as they ought to be—are quite different things.

2199. Would not the proper distribution of constituencies in Germany and the knocking on the head of the gross gerrymandering there, be a remedy quite as good as proportional representation?—I do not think it would be as good as proportional representation, but it would be a better system than exists at present.

2200. You know the main cause of the gross injustice there is the outrageous gerrymandering of the constituencies?—Undoubtedly.

2201. Another remedy, that is to say, redistribution on a population basis, would really meet that?—It would meet that to some extent. I can quite conceive there would come up, as there is arising at the present moment, a party in our own party which is to a certain extent against the present management of that party. They are perfectly entitled to representation just as much as the main body of the party, if they split off and go for themselves. Under what you propose as a remedy that might not appear. There would be the same great difficulty. The object we have in view is to give a full outlet to every form of opinion in proportion to the strength that it represents in the whole country. That is all.

2202. (*Chairman.*) Have you any other reforms you would like to suggest?—I believe, myself personally, in the initiative and referendum. I think that is what is needed. The great ignorance of a large portion of the population, to which reference has been made, is so undoubted that I do not see how you can bring them gradually into a conception of the great problems that lie ahead of them unless they are given an opportunity of studying the questions before the country; and I do not see how you can deal with this except by the initiative in the first instance and the referendum in the second.

2203. I do not know that we are qualified to include that in our investigation?—No, but you asked for my suggestions.

2204. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) What do you say as to all elections being held on one day?—I am very anxious for that, and one person one vote.

2205. (*Chairman.*) And the reduction of expenses, and so on?—Yes, the reduction of expenses as far as possible. It is at present a tax for performing a public service, and that I think should be removed.

2206. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You do not fear an enormous increase of newspaper influence under your system?—I think the Newspaper Press is losing its influence every day. That is my view of it. I think you see it from the fact that parties are growing up which are independent of the Press in every way. We have grown in spite of the Press.

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2207. You appeal largely to the working classes?— Still, after all, the Press is supported by the working class. In the main the cheap Press is. I contend at the present time the influence of the Press on the country is far less than it was when I was 30 years younger.

2208. Do not you think outside the working class its influence is still enormous?—No, I do not think so, and I could give certain instances of that. In London,

for example, when it came to a question of a change of control, it was not the Press; it was certain ideas of maladministration, whether true or false, which lost the Progressives on the County Council their majority at the election. I believe, as a matter of fact, that the Press follows rather than leads. I do not believe in the idea that the Press of this country or any other country has so great an influence as is sometimes supposed.

The witness withdrew.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

Thursday, 24th June 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D.,
D.C.L.

The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Captain JAMES CRAIG, M.P., called and examined.

The following memorandum was handed in by the witness:—

According to the last census returns (1901) the population of Ireland was 4,450,000.

At the rate of decrease shown during the preceding decennial period I approximate the present population (1909) at 4,300,000.

This population is represented by 101 members representing counties and boroughs, and two members representing Dublin University. The total number of registered electors may be taken at 690,000.

Before dealing with the representation of the minority, I desire to make some general observations on the present condition of affairs.

(A.) It will be noted that a different ratio of registered electors to population obtains in different parts of the country.

In the county of Kerry, returning four-members, the population may be taken at 171,000; the registered electors at 22,900; this gives approximately one elector to eight per head of population.

In the county Antrim, also a four-member county, the population may be taken at 192,000, and the registered electors at 33,500, approximately one elector to six per head of population.

Dealing with individual constituencies, North Mayo has a population of 49,000 and only 7,000 electors; North Antrim has a population of 45,700 and 7,700 electors, an increase of 700 electors, on a total population less by 4,000.

Compare also the four divisions of the county of Tyrone with the four divisions of the county of Tipperary. The number of registered electors I have taken from Dodd, 1909:—

Constituency.	Population.	Electorate.
North Tyrone	38,000	6,400
North Tipperary	39,000	5,600
Mid Tyrone	38,000	6,600
Mid Tipperary	40,000	6,000
South Tyrone	34,000	5,900
South Tipperary	37,000	4,800
East Tyrone	39,000	6,400
East Tipperary	41,000	5,600

Of course, numerous other instances can be given on comparison of the returns, but there is no doubt as to the inference that the smaller proportion of the electorate to the population is found in divisions which are overwhelmingly Nationalist, and the larger proportion in those where there is a large Unionist vote. Obviously the higher the percentage of the electorate, the more closely the member represents the constituency.

The difference in this ratio leads me to the conclusion that population, *per se*, is not to be taken as a safe basis for distribution affecting parliamentary representation.

There can be no justification for the power now conferred on 22,900 electors in Kerry to return four members to Parliament, while 33,000 (one-third more) in the county of Antrim are restricted to the same number.

On the Kerry proportion, Antrim would be entitled to six instead of four.

(B.) I further desire to draw attention to the disproportion existing between the number of registered electors in various county divisions compared with others in Ireland. It is right to point out that for the purpose of comparison I have chosen the more extreme cases, from the total list showing the electorate in every Irish constituency, which I submit to the Commission. Compare—

Longford Co.
North } Two divisions. Total, 7,300 electors.
South } Two members.
Waterford Co.
East } Two divisions. Total, 3,400 electors.
West } Two members.
King's Co.
Birr } Two divisions. Total, 8,900 electors.
Tullamore } Two members.

With—
Antrim, South. Total, 9,924 electors. One member.
Down, North. Total, 9,830 electors. One member.
Dublin, South. Total, 11,100 electors. One member.
The first three named counties return six members, all Nationalists, with an average electorate of 4,100 for each.

The last three mentioned constituencies return three members, all Unionists, with an average electorate of 10,280 electors.

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Dealing with entire counties, compare any one of the foregoing two-member Nationalist counties with the only two-member Unionist county of Derry with a total of 17,600 electors.

Further, taking four-member counties, the Nationalist county of Donegal, where all the members stood as Nationalists, has 26,000 electors. The Unionist county of Antrim, where all the members at least stood as Unionists, has 33,000 electors.

It will be found, generally speaking, that the Unionist county constituencies have greater population, a higher percentage of registered electors, and a much smaller proportionate representation in Parliament than Nationalist constituencies with smaller electorates.

This injustice should be dealt with.

(C.) Similar inequalities will be found to exist in the case of the borough representation.

I recognise that a comparison of a borough standard with a county standard does not give fair results. It is an open question as to how far it is permissible to compare a single-member borough with a division of another borough returning a member. I think myself that such a comparison can be defended.

The cases of—

Kilkenny City,	Population 13,200.	Electors 1,541.
Galway City,	" 16,200.	" 2,295.
Newry,	" 13,137.	" 1,986.

are often mentioned and contrasted with other county constituencies in the United Kingdom.

I think that their true comparison in fairness would be with—

Durham City,	Population 15,000.	Electors 2,600.
Salisbury,	" 19,400.	" 3,400.
Falmouth,	" 16,300.	" 3,000.

I am of opinion that all these small constituencies should be abolished with the object of uniformity, but I desire to restrict my evidence to internal inequalities in Ireland.

There are five one-member borough constituencies in Ireland returning Nationalist members, Waterford, Limerick, Galway, Kilkenny, and Newry. Their total electorate numbers 14,300, an average of 2,900 electors for each of five members. There is only one single-member borough constituency in Ireland returning a Unionist, Derry City. The number of registered electors there is 5,400, or very nearly double the electorate averaged by each of the five Nationalist boroughs. But if it be permissible to compare one-member borough constituencies with separate divisions in other boroughs, the case is more marked when the average of 2,900 I have arrived at is contrasted with 12,000 electors in North Belfast (Unionist) or 16,500 in East Belfast (Unionist).

If this comparison should be objected to, I take one which from any point of view is unimpeachable. I refer to the only two urban four-member boroughs of Dublin and Belfast.

In each of these boroughs there is one division which in each case has from time to time been represented both by a Unionist and a Nationalist in succession. I refer to the Stephen's Green division of Dublin and the west division of Belfast. This leaves three divisions in each borough which have continuously and uniformly respectively returned three professing Nationalists in Dublin and three professing Unionist in Belfast.

In Dublin the total electorate for these three Nationalist divisions is 24,700, an average of, say, 8,200 for each.

In Belfast the electorate for the three Unionist divisions is 39,000, an average of 13,000 for each.

If the Dublin average were taken as the unit for comparison, the present three Unionist divisions in Belfast would be entitled to approximately two additional members.

(D.) I desire under this head to draw the attention of the Commission to the existence of illiteracy in the various counties and divisions, as I wish to submit that this should be made, with or without limitation, an electoral disqualification in any re-arrangement. Fifty years ago it might have been contended that the absence of adequate facilities for the education of the

whole community would make such a disqualification an injustice. But for 50 years there has been the fullest opportunity for free education for all classes under the system of the National Board.

The present conditions under the Ballot Act of illiterate voting lend themselves to many abuses, the chief of which is that all secrecy and protection for the voter is destroyed. Indeed it is well known that in centres where intimidation is prevalent, an educated voter will often take advantage of the illiterate vote in order that it may be known in what manner he has voted, turning the Act into a measure for actually securing what it was intended to prevent. The percentage of illiteracy is much heavier in Nationalist constituencies.

From the last census returns, the proportion of persons over five years of age who were wholly illiterate was 26 per cent. in the four-member Nationalist county of Donegal, 8 per cent. in the Unionist four-member county of Antrim, and 9.6 per cent. in the county of Down returning three Unionists and one Nationalist. (See Table 152 of census returns.)

I would particularly refer to the last return for illiterate voting at elections.

There being no contest in 1906 in the great majority of constituencies represented by Nationalists, it is not possible to give Donegal, to which I have referred, but reference to the Parliamentary Return will show that in my own county of Down, where three seats were contested in 1906, the number of illiterates voting was as follows:—

County and Division.	No. of Illiterate Voters.	Total No. of Votes Polled.	Represented by
Down, North -	208	7,499	Unionist.
" East -	508	7,372	Unionist.
" South -	1,224	7,201	Nationalist.

Further, I would quote the same return:—

County and Division.	No. of Illiterate Voters.	Total No. of Votes Polled.	Represented by
Galway, North -	1,073	3,649	Nationalist.
Belfast, West -	312	8,451	Nationalist.
" North -	100	9,550	Unionist.

It would be seen that if the system of illiterate voting as at present carried on were abolished, there would be proportionately a greater diminution in the registered electorate of the Nationalist constituencies than in Unionist ones, and this element, I submit, should not be lost sight of in any proposals for redistribution.

(E.) The fifth head on which I desire to offer evidence relates to the position of minorities. Speaking again generally, and as a working rule, it is possible to approximate the numerical value of a political party in Ireland. The Protestant or non-Roman Catholic community, whom for brevity I call Protestants, may be taken as being overwhelmingly Unionist. The Roman Catholic, as a rule, is in active or passive sympathy with the Nationalist party, or at least their objects. I do not assert that there are no Protestant Home Rulers, but small as their numbers are, their defection would be considerably more than covered by the adhesion of Roman Catholic Unionists. And consequently if I take the total Protestant strength as Unionist and the total Roman Catholic strength as Nationalist, my approximation errs, if at all, well on the side of safety. Happily or unhappily, the lines of political demarcation between the two parties follow so closely the line of religion that no one with a knowledge of the country will deny that the churches form grounds for political enumeration. Now in Ireland, unlike Great Britain, we have census returns of the religious professions of the inhabitants. I must here deal with population merely, as of course these are not

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of the registered electors. Out of the total population in 1901 of 4,450,000, 3,000,000 were Roman Catholic. In the province of Leinster the Roman Catholic population numbered 85 per cent., the Protestant 15 per cent.; the Roman Catholics returned 28 Nationalist members, the Protestants one (South Dublin); on a fair proportion the numbers should be 4 to 25. The four divisions of the city of Dublin contain 233,000 Roman Catholics and a minority of Protestants numbering 53,000, or about one-fourth, yet the latter have no Parliamentary representation; on the other hand, the four divisions of Belfast contain 264,000 Protestants and 84,000 Roman Catholics, yet the latter hold one seat out of four. It is right to point out that I am dealing with census returns of 1901 and the results of the election of 1906. The county of Cork contains 18,000 Protestants; it returns seven members to Parliament, none of whom represent this minority. I admit that the county of Antrim returns four Unionist members while it has a Roman Catholic population of 38,000, but this hardship is not felt so severely by a Roman Catholic minority in a Unionist constituency as by a Protestant minority in a Nationalist constituency. In the first place, the Nationalist minority feels that it is adequately represented by 82 Nationalist members returned by their co-religionists in Ireland, while a Protestant minority can only look to 17 or 18 Irish Unionists, and secondly, they have considerable political influence, practically denied to Unionist minorities, when, as frequently happens in Ulster, two candidates each professing Unionism contest the division in which such a minority lives. At present the four members for the county Tyrone are returned by the solid Nationalist vote. The Roman Catholic population is 80,000. The Protestant population is 75,000. Especially in Tyrone is religion and politics contentious; yet these 75,000 have no Parliamentary representative. This is more marked if the figures for Mid Tyrone are excluded, as in that seat the Nationalist is usually unopposed.

In the remaining three divisions the Roman Catholic population numbers 67,000 and the Protestant 59,000, yet the latter have not one of the three members.

In East Donegal the Roman Catholic population is 25,000, the Protestant 15,000; the latter have no representation in the county.

In the county Down the Protestants number 128,000, the Roman Catholics 54,000, and the Roman Catholics have one-fourth of the representation. My inquiries have led me to the conclusion, again speaking generally, that the system in Ireland has provided, on the whole, adequately for Nationalist minorities, but that it works hardly and without sufficient elasticity where the minority is Unionist.

I do not, however, consider that proportional representation as generally understood, with plural votes and large constituencies returning four, five, or six members, would adequately meet the case where there are practically only two parties, and these divided on one main issue, with no subordinate groups or classes of political opinions in groups or otherwise. I believe that the grievances and inequalities I have pointed out could be better met by redistribution of the existing constituencies into equal electoral areas returning single members as at present.

I have carefully studied the evidence by Lord Courtney of Penrith on the subject of proportional representation, given before the Commission on April 1st, and, leaving Ireland out of the question, although he referred to specific cases in that part of the United Kingdom, I cannot agree that it would be a satisfactory system. My main reason for objecting to any change in the single-area constituency is that the four, five, or six members representing a large area under the proportional representation scheme would be in constant competition with one another in regard to popularity and generosity in contributing towards local religious objects, bazaars, charities, athletic associations, &c. The tendency would be to compete with one another not only by frequent subscriptions, but also by constant incursions into the constituency rather than by service rendered to the electorate in the House of Commons.

It would also tend to a neglect of those minor interests scattered throughout every constituency in order to attend to the larger towns where the voting power was greatest. If any one of the four, five, or six members secured the whole of the votes of one large town comprising a single industry, he would be assured of election, and labourers, farmers, and fishermen (I take these for the purpose of my argument), if they were in a minority, might find that, after all precautions had been taken to secure them representation, they were really neglected so far as their interests were concerned. As it is at present, with conveniently sized one-area constituencies, a member has the full responsibility of representing all classes within its boundaries, and if a candidate desires to capture votes, he must appeal to every interest, no matter how small, in order to secure his return. Moreover, at present the personal element is naturally much more in evidence; a member is in closer touch with the various interests concerned, and looks upon his constituency as his own preserve. It is considered a point of honour that no member of Parliament or candidate should ever hold a political meeting in the constituency of another member of the same political party without first asking his permission.

With a view to electoral reform my proposals would be—

- (1) To ascertain, by recognised principles, the proportion towards the rest of the United Kingdom to which the whole of Ireland would be entitled for her Party representation. I do not claim, naturally, any specially favourable treatment for Ireland over the rest of the United Kingdom.
- (2) Excluding all illiterate (under 60 if necessary) to ascertain from the registered electorate as a basis, the number of representatives to which the minority could fairly be held to be entitled.
NOTE.—This could possibly be settled at a conference between the representatives of the two Irish parties, or, failing agreement, a Commission, consisting of one person nominated on behalf of each party and a referee chosen by such persons, could determine it.
- (3) On ascertaining this figure, a Commission for redistribution to sit, with an instruction to carry it into effect as far as possible, with power to group units, where necessary, which might reasonably be expected to give the results ascertained under (2).
- (4) The county constituencies to have so far as possible a uniform standard of numbers of registered electors. Like rule for boroughs.
- (5) Abolition of smaller single-member boroughs to be carried out.
- (6) Power to revise the scheme of redistribution if the results prove that the scheme has failed in its object of securing adequate representation for the minority.

2209. (Chairman.) You are one of the Unionist members for the North of Ireland?—Yes.

2210. You have gone into the question of the present system of representation in the country, and particularly with reference to Ireland?—Almost all my evidence deals with Ireland; I have only touched on the internal question of Irish representation in this evidence.

2211. In your first paragraph you refer to the fact that the population of Ireland is decreasing?—Slightly.

2212. The total number of registered electors is now 690,000?—Roughly speaking, I think that is correct.

2213. In paragraph "A" you say that "A different ratio of registered electors to population obtains in different parts of the country"?—Yes; I give evidence on that, particularly in Kerry and in the county of Antrim. It will be found under paragraph A that there is a very great difference in the proportion between the electorate in some divisions and the population. Later on, the reason that I have included those

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in A under that head will be evident to the Commission, because I want to show that the minority in Ireland suffer much more than the majority do under that particular head.

2214. The conclusion you come to is, that the smaller proportion of the electorate to the population is found in divisions which are overwhelmingly Nationalist?—That is the conclusion. I bring out the reason of that later on.

2215. Your inference is that the population ought not to be taken as a safe basis for redistribution?—I do not think so.

2216. In paragraph "B" you draw attention to the disproportion existing between the number of registered electors in various county divisions compared with others in Ireland. You have taken, I gather, extreme cases?—Yes, I take extreme cases. I wish to be perfectly fair in the comparisons I make. It is very easy to mislead by taking cases which are practically unfair, as I will show later on. But these are extreme cases. Longford, Waterford, and King's County, as compared with Antrim South, Down South, and Dublin South. It will be seen that the first three return six members with an average electorate of 4,100; and the last three—Antrim, Down, and Dublin—return three members with an average electorate of 10,280.

2217. Do you consider that the anomalies in Ireland are more accentuated than in Scotland or England?—I confine my evidence as much as possible to the internal conditions in Ireland, and I do not make any comparisons, except that later on, if you look at paragraph "C," I give the cases of Kilkenny City, Galway City, and Newry, which are frequently quoted in comparison with the enormous divisions in England, to show the extraordinary difference in the power of the electorate in one of those small places, compared with one of the large boroughs or counties in England; but I point out that a true comparison in all fairness would be with Durham City, Salisbury, and Falmouth, because then you have practically three very extreme cases in Ireland which you can compare with three fairly extreme cases in England, and I think it would be fair to do that in considering that particular point you put to me.

2218. I suppose a comparison is usually made between Newry and West Ham?—Quite so. It is to prevent that, that I have put in to safeguard any exaggeration in the matter, a comparison between those three and Durham, Salisbury, and Falmouth. The figures are almost identical. There is only a few thousands difference in the total.

2219. (Sir Francis Hopwood.) You speak of "two-member Nationalist counties," but are any of the counties in Ireland represented by two members, or are they divided into two single-member constituencies?—I mean two single constituencies represented by two different members.

2220. You have no two-member constituencies?—No.

2221. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) There is no two-member constituency in Ireland except the University?—That is so. I am not positive about some of the Nationalist towns. I would not like to say definitely, but I think the University is the only one with two members.

2222. (Chairman.) Cork City has three members?—I think it has.

2223. I think it is divided into three divisions?—I do not think there is a double-member constituency.

2224. You say: "There is only one single-member borough constituency in Ireland returning a 'Unionist'?"—That is the city of Derry. There is a considerable difference between the number of electors. 2,900 is the average for the five members that are referred to in the five one-member borough constituencies, and there are 5,400 in Derry, that is, nearly double the average electorate of each of the other five.

2225. In making a comparison between these boroughs and the divisions of Belfast, it is admitted, I suppose, that Belfast has of recent years grown out of all proportion to any other part of Ireland?—Yes, it has prospered even in my time to a most extraordinary extent, but I may say with regard to that, that the

prosperity is perhaps a little more apparent than real, so far as the figures are concerned, because within the last few years they have extended the boundary, and taken in some of the surrounding counties of Antrim and Down, which robbed Antrim and Down of some of their voters, and brought them into the city of Belfast's extended area.

2226. It made the urban constituencies much larger?—Yes; East Belfast has 16,500 electors.

2227. Has the extension been done recently?—Speaking from memory, it occurred about 12 years ago.

2228. Since the Redistribution Bill?—Yes.

2229. Then you compare Belfast borough with Dublin?—Yes, in Belfast and Dublin the same position arises with regard to one of the divisions. They are both cities with four seats, and one of the seats is held alternately every now and then by a Nationalist and a Unionist, and the consequence is that it leaves a very fair comparison between the other three, which are held permanently by the Unionists on the one hand and by the Nationalists on the other. If the Dublin average were taken as the unit for comparison, the present three Unionist divisions in Belfast would be entitled to approximately two additional members.

2230. This rapid growth of population has not taken place in Dublin to anything like the same degree as in Belfast?—I think not. The tendency is rather from the south to the north, and I think that is to a certain extent why we find the population in the north rather increasing so far as the electorate is concerned.

2231. With reference to this question of disproportion between the sizes of different constituencies, do you consider that the difficulty will be met by a system of redistribution?—I think it could be very much improved in Ireland. I think that the case in Ireland would be simple. I have given a note at the end of how I think advantage could be taken in Ireland to make things on a much fairer system for the minority. I think it could be done without difficulty, because some of the cases are so glaring.

2232. (Lord Lochee.) You make reference to the existence of illiteracy. Is that within the scope of our reference?—I am not sure with regard to that, but I am in the hands of the Commission.

2233. (Chairman.) I may take it there is a larger number of illiterate voters in Ireland than elsewhere, and whatever the bearings of this point may be, it would affect Ireland more acutely than other parts of the United Kingdom?—Yes; in any electoral reform it would have to be borne in mind, because the proportion is so very much greater. Anticipating the point, the only note I made outside Ireland is this, which I turned up more out of curiosity: In Ireland there were only 15 contested county elections and 6 borough elections, that is 21 contested elections at the last general election. The votes were 135,000 odd, and the illiterates amounted to 12,510. There were a very small number of contested elections, and yet there were 12,510 illiterates. England and Wales had only 19,758 illiterates for 4,480,000 votes; and in Scotland only 2,041 illiterates for 558,000 votes polled. It struck me, if any evidence was being taken by the Commission on that point, it would be of some value to show what a very extraordinary number of illiterate voters there are in some parts of Ireland.

2234. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) Does it work out in Ireland to about 24 times the proportion to what it is in Scotland?—It is hardly fair to judge, I think, from the last general election, because in Ireland it is very seldom the Nationalist seats are contested. The 18 Unionist seats are contested practically every time, both at the general election and bye-elections, but the Nationalist seats are, as a rule, held in perpetuity. The consequence is we have not got any what I would call reliable figures to go upon with regard to it. I have given a few cases here, if you care to refer to the county divisions of Down—North, East, and South. That is my county, which I know very well indeed. It will be seen that in North Down there was a contest with 208 illiterate voters. The poll is the same in the three divisions, North, East, and South. In North

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[Continued.]

Down there were 208; in East Down 508; and in South Down (held by a Nationalist) 1,224. Yet it is all the same county, and I have in my own division, which is the East division of Down, a very large number of Roman Catholics too. We find that the average of illiterate voting is very high. I put it down not altogether to illiteracy, but to the desire on the part of a great many of the Nationalists to declare themselves as to whom they vote for. There may be some little local squabble, and they say "so and so has gone wrong," so he takes care to vote "illiterate" if he can.

2235. So that they can have evidence of the way he voted?—Then they have evidence of how he voted. I do not suppose it would be possible for me to substantiate that, but I think it is the fact.

2236. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) How does the illiterate voter exercise his right to vote? What is the machinery?—I am afraid there must be some irregularity with regard to it.

2237. He goes into the polling booth?—Yes, and he swears that he cannot read or write. I forget what the terms of the oath are.

2238. Then he asks for a voting paper?—He asks for a voting paper, and when he has asked for it, the officer in charge must come forward to superintend the voting.

2239. The officer in charge of the room?—Yes. Then he asks him, in the presence of all concerned—the agents of the various associations standing round—for whom he desires to vote, and he says: "I desire to vote for so and so," and then the X is placed opposite the name. I daresay in many instances the people are illiterate to a certain extent.

2240. Then the paper is put into the ballot box?—Yes, as a vote. I think it is counted differently. It is not put straight into the box. I rather fancy, if my recollection serves me, that these illiterate votes are kept separate, or marked in some way, because there is a return from which I take these figures, showing it is necessary to keep a record.

2241. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) He marks a counterfoil?—Yes.

2242. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The substance of it is that the illiterate voter does not vote by secret ballot?—That is what I bring out here.

2243. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) All the officers know how an illiterate voter has voted?—Yes, that is the point. I am not saying that all these votes are necessarily the votes of real illiterates, but that in some instances we all believe the claim of illiteracy is used for that purpose.

2244. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Is it the custom usually to admit the friends and partisans of the candidates into the polling-booths?—Yes, certain agents are allowed in, and if I remember rightly each party has a right to nominate three.

2245. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Do you mean the scrutineers in the polling-booth?—Yes.

2246. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) There are people presiding in the polling-booth?—I do not refer to the sheriff's officers at all, but there are a certain number of people allowed into the polling-booth to put the voter on the right track to get his paper, and they can always find out, by the illiterate voter calling out the name, whom he has voted for.

2247. (*Chairman.*) Your statement at "E" draws attention to the fact that political parties in Ireland largely follow the line of religious differences?—It is merely to amplify that statement that I put my reasons in writing. I class all the Roman Catholics as Nationalists, and the Protestants as Unionists, and any defections either way would about balance one another.

2248. And that is admitted on all hands?—It is admitted on all hands that that is so.

2249. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Are defections numerous?—They are not. There are extraordinarily few. If the elections in the Tyrone are taken as a basis—speaking from memory it is quite easy to check the figures—I think there were three elections in rapid succession, and the numbers polled were very high in regard to the electorate, and they worked out at a

majority of 15 in one election, nine in the next, and 19 in the next, or something like that.

2250. It shows the perfection of organisation in fact?—Probably a death, or something like that, is all that would interfere with it.

2251. (*Chairman.*) Is party organisation carried to a very high state of efficiency?—A very high state of efficiency in the contested Unionist divisions; but of course in the Nationalist divisions it is different—they work it almost entirely on the religious side.

2252. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Does not that account for that very low proportion of electors to population in many of the Nationalist districts to which you have been drawing attention?—I daresay that would have an effect undoubtedly. It will be seen at the bottom of page 7, under the heading "E," that we have census returns for religion in Ireland, which do not exist in England or Scotland, and consequently we are able to approximate very fairly the position of parties at any time. I may say that this census return is for 1901, and comparisons are made roughly with the general election of 1906. There may have been a little difference between those two dates, but I do not think it would affect it very much.

2253. (*Chairman.*) Do you think the census return is accurately made out?—Yes, and would accurately give the two parties.

2254. Substantially they all admit the faith they belong to in filling in the returns?—Yes; I think each side is proud of its faith. I do not think a Roman Catholic hesitates for a moment to say that he is one, any more than a Protestant would not take pride in saying he is a Protestant. The feeling is so much more intense in Ireland than it is anywhere else.

2255. You point out that in certain parts of the country solid representation is given to the Nationalists, although they have comparatively a small majority of the electors?—Quite so. I would like to point out that of course the anomaly cuts both ways. In Antrim there are 38,000 Roman Catholics with no representation at all, as I freely admit; but if you look at page 8 I go on to say that the hardship is not felt nearly so severely by the minority in cases of that sort as in the case of the Unionists, for the reason that the Nationalists have a solid 80 members on whom they can rely, and very few of whose seats are contested; that is to say, they are practically certain of returning 80 members, whereas the Unionist seats are generally contested by opponents, some of them calling themselves Independent Unionists, some Liberal Unionists, some Nationalists, and so forth, with the consequence that the Nationalists have the opportunity of really swaying the vote, because if a Unionist stands in one of those 18 seats (which is all one can ever hope to have), and another Unionist comes forward, it divides the Unionist vote, and then the Nationalist has the determining element in it; so that they are not so badly off as we are, who can never have a chance in any of their divisions at all.

2256. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Are there existing cases where the minority is represented?—In my division of county Down there are four seats and one is held by a Nationalist.

2257. He got in on a split vote?—He got in on a fair and square fight; there were two candidates. In county Down the drift of the Roman Catholic population in the past was towards the south division, and consequently the Nationalists now always hold South Down.

2258. Have you any constituency in the North of Ireland where two Unionists and a Nationalist stood for one seat, and the Nationalist got in in consequence of the division between the Unionists?—Yes; in the case of West Belfast the official Unionist candidate stood, a Liberal Unionist, and at the eleventh hour an unofficial man stepped forward.

2259. Also by way of being a Unionist?—By way of being a Unionist; and I think I am right in saying that he got about 150 votes, or something like that, and the seat was then lost to the Unionist Party by about 17 votes. He stood obviously for the purpose of creating the position that evidently resulted in the end. I think that is open knowledge.

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[Continued.]

2260. The Nationalist then represents a minority of votes?—In that case he represents a minority.

2261. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Is not county Tyrone the most glaring case of all of the exclusion of a minority?—It is a case where the population is almost equal; but then against that it will be only fair to say that if you take North Fermanagh, which is almost equally Nationalist and Unionist, there we are able to hold the seat. On the other hand, they have held it and may hold it again. It drifts backwards and forwards with a majority one way or the other of about 100.

2262. The figures given to me with regard to Tyrone are extraordinary. There seem to be about 74,000 Protestants to about 82,000 Nationalists, and the Nationalists hold all the four seats?—Yes.

2263. (*Chairman.*) You have gone into the question whether there are any remedies applicable to Ireland. Have you come to any conclusion?—I had the evidence of Lord Courtney on proportional representation sent to me by the Secretary, and I read it through very carefully, and personally I do not favour proportional representation to settle the question in Ireland. I think that we could get at the desired result fairly by the remedy that I suggest at the end of my statement rather than by proportional representation. In Ireland I think the feeling on all sides would be to have a man associated with a definite single area seat where he would be responsible inside that area for the Parliamentary representation, and I think I would be safe in saying that even the minority would prefer that the seat was held by some one. There is a very strong local feeling in Ireland with regard to seats, and I think the feeling would be rather in favour of sticking to the present system. From our point of view naturally we wish for redistribution in Ireland, and desire to see the minority better treated. As I tried to bring out, the Unionist ought to be better represented in some glaring instances.

2264. You consider the local connection between member and constituency is very desirable?—Very desirable.

2265. Particularly in Ireland?—Particularly in Ireland, because in Ireland there is not the same party organisation as in England. Candidates are not sent down from the head office, saying: "Here is your man, you return him." There they go to the very opposite extreme; they sift every local man as far as possible before they venture outside for a candidate, and the electorate resent very much any one being what they call "thrust upon them." They always like to choose their own man. That is why, speaking from my own experience, they have done away altogether with a central organisation in Ireland. Every seat is left on its own basis to choose its own member. If you take the whole of county Down as one division it is a very large division, and if they allocated four seats to it under the proportional representation scheme it appears to me that a man would be representing the whole of this large area, and, as I point out, the drain on one's time and one's pocket with regard to subscriptions, and so forth, would be very much increased, I fancy, under such a scheme. A man would represent a county, and supposing the election resulted in three Unionists and one Nationalist being returned, the three Unionists would unwittingly, even though they were the best of friends, try to outbid one another for popularity. Subscription lists come in by the hundred, and one perhaps gives a 5*l.* note, and another can only possibly afford 10*s.* or 1*l.* To my mind it would cause in our country a friction which would not occur in your country, if they began a system of some sort like that. Next, from the electors' point of view, I think it would rather tend to make a man look after his constituency more than the work he ought to do in the House of Commons. If one member kept constantly stamping through the constituency for the purpose of always being returned at the head of the poll, he would naturally not be representing his people in the House of Commons. The effect of that would be that the people of the locality would not have their interests really looked after in the way they ought to be. At present a man

leaves his constituency knowing that no other politician of the same shade would venture into the constituency without asking his leave. He knows he is safe when he is in the House of Commons doing his duty, and at the same time knows when he comes back to the constituency he is able to account for his actions. Therefore I am not in favour of this scheme, so far as Ireland is concerned.

2266. You do not consider that it would obtain representation for the minority?—I do not think it would, because there are only the two parties. It is not as though there were groups in Ireland as there are in other countries. We are in two camps, one Unionist and the other Nationalist, and I cannot conceive that any scheme of proportional representation would alter that.

2267. Not even in a county like Tyrone, where there is a very large minority?—Tyrone is a very exceptional case, and speaking for myself—and I can only speak for myself—looking at it from the whole interests of Ireland, I do not think the suggested system would be a good thing.

2268. Are you aware that in the last Bill for Local Government there was a plan of proportional representation proposed?—Yes, in the House of Commons, and I think it broke down altogether.

2269. Do you know at all why it broke down. Was it because it was found unworkable?—I could not really say that. I do not know what led them to drop it.

2270. But the fact is it was dropped?—Yes, as far as I know.

2271. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It never found its way into a Bill?—Quite so.

2272. (*Chairman.*) Is there any other scheme of electoral reform which you have considered—say the alternative vote?—I understand that in order to get round the difficulty of a member losing identity with a particular part of the country, the Electoral Reform Association have made suggestions that the seats after being won at the election should be allocated to each of the members in the division; but I cannot conceive that that will get over any real difficulty. Take, for the sake of example, county Down, where I can follow things better. There, the one at the head of the poll would have the choice of which of the four divisions he would be identified with. In county Down the last division any Unionist—and I presume the Unionists would have three and the Nationalists one—would desire to associate himself with would be the poorer part of the county. Although it is a very fine part of the county, still they would leave the South Division to the last. Supposing four Unionists were elected, naturally the fourth on the list would then have to represent the South Division. After identifying himself with the South Division for a period of five or six years he might then be third at the poll, and might choose another Division. The consequence is that a man would never really get to know his constituency in the way he does at present. In Ireland I think, as I have said, the desire is that they should be identified closely with the division as long as they represent it in Parliament. I think a man might identify himself with one part of a division, and then because he was beaten by a few votes under proportional representation at the next election, he might be put out and be told by another member: "I want your division—a very nice one—please go elsewhere." It strikes me it would not be a satisfactory solution.

2273. It would not really bring about the desired result, you consider?—That is my opinion. I have ventured to make suggestions for what they are worth at the end of my memorandum.

2274. In your first suggestion you say: "To ascertain, by recognised principles, the proportion towards the rest of the United Kingdom to which the whole of Ireland would be entitled for her party representation." Does that mean with reference to the actual number of members which Ireland sends to the House of Commons?—Yes.

2275. That would open a large question as to the repeal of the Act of Union?—It would.

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2276. I think this Commission has to deal with the existing electorate. You would be in favour, supposing redistribution became an automatic process, of the Irish representation varying from time to time?—I would.

2277. Sometimes 101, sometimes 90, and so on?—Quite so. By using the words "by recognised principles," I, of course, do not suggest that if it is decided the 101 members are to be adhered to there, that is the recognised principle, but I would go beyond that. If you cannot get over the question of the Act of Union that part is valueless. All I say is that so far as I am concerned I do not claim any special favourable treatment for Ireland over any part of the United Kingdom.

2278. You would exclude all illiterates?—Under 60, if necessary.

2279. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Not disfranchising illiterates, but excluding them from the basis of calculation?—Yes, excluding them from the basis of calculation. I think this could possibly be settled by a friendly conference between the representatives of the two parties.

2280. (*Chairman.*) That is not a point of great difference now?—I think it could be done. If it were known that a reform was to be instituted, I think the Nationalists would prefer to settle it in a friendly way rather than have a Commission. I do not know, of course, and I can only speak for myself, but I should imagine we could fix it up.

2281. Your suggestion would be to appoint a Commission to carry out redistribution?—Yes.

2282. That would involve the sacrifice of a good many of the smaller boroughs. They would lose their political identity, of course?—Yes, a certain number in Ireland, but not a great many.

2283. Would that cause great dissatisfaction in the country, or would the obvious advantages compensate for it?—I think the obvious advantages would compensate for it. I think Dungannon used to be a seat, and they have done away with it, and you never hear a word about it now. At first it would cause a little friction. I know some Unionist seats would go. I think undoubtedly they would be amalgamated with some of the others in any scheme, but the friction caused would be compensated for in the long run, I think, by the sense of fairness and justice in the end.

2284. You are strongly in favour of the retention of the single-member constituency?—Personally, I am.

2285. Have you any other suggestions to make as far as the conduct of elections is concerned?—No, I have not. I have not contested many elections myself, but I have been through a good many with friends, and I must confess I think everything with regard to the conduct of elections in Ireland is perfect.

2286. Would you be prepared to support all elections being held on one day?—Personally I think it would be foolish. I think with the existing staff and organisation of the various sheriffs in the counties, they can move from one division round the circle with the same excellent staff as they generally have, and carry out an election as smoothly as possible. If they have four staffs all working at the same time in four divisions of a county, and perhaps a large county, the sheriff, or sub-sheriff who generally does the work, I am afraid would not be able to give the personal supervision to the work which hitherto, in my own experience, they have carried out most admirably. Sometimes in large county divisions they have been able to collect the ballot-boxes and count the votes and have the result out by 12 o'clock at night—all in one day. I have in my mind West Down, which is a large and very populous district, and there they were able to do it all in one day without any flaw in the whole arrangement from beginning to end. If you take the whole of the work on one day it would have the effect of preventing dual voting—that is to say, a person in Ireland could not go across and exercise

his vote in Scotland. It would have that effect, and that is a wide question; but so far as the organisation is concerned and the carrying on of the elections, I think it is much better that the sheriff of each county should run the election in the smoothest possible manner. There is a certain amount of friendly rivalry, and personally I can speak very highly of the way in which the work has been done in Ireland.

2287. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Do you think it would increase the returning officer's expenses?—Yes, and I think it would be less reliable.

2288. More staff required?—Yes. As a rule the sheriffs are very active on those occasions and take a personal pride in the way the work is done. They would naturally have to cover a great deal of ground in the one day to see their staffs were working, and very frequently questions arise which only they can answer. I think, under all the circumstances, speaking offhand since the point was put to me, that the sheriff taking his staff round from division to division is able to do the work better than if he did it all on one day.

2289. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) Do you express any opinion about the alternative vote with single-member constituencies—not large constituencies as suggested by Lord Courtney—each voter having two choices, that is, having to mark his first and second preferences?—No, I do not express any opinion about that. If my opinion was asked, I think it would not apply really to Ireland at all. As we are at present, there are no groups.

2290. There are no three-cornered contests?—There are no groups.

2291. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) But it would have been applied in that case you mentioned at Belfast?—That is one case, I agree, in which it would have been applied. Of course, it would apply if anything like that became common practice, but there is a sense of feeling in the community that anyone who does that, does not deflect very many votes. In that particular case in the city of Belfast, with the parties in close proximity to the same number, it made sufficient difference to lose the seat to the Nationalist Party; but it is not likely frequently to happen.

2292. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) You do not think it would be worth while to introduce the alternative vote at present?—I do not see any necessity for it at present. Where you have a Unionist standing, and a Nationalist standing, and they have a fair and square fight, it would not affect it.

2293. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) You say on page 7 of your memorandum that the total electorate is 4,450,000, of which 3,000,000 are Roman Catholics?—Yes.

2294. If you take the Catholic and the Home Rule vote as synonymous, that means the Unionist vote is rather more than one-fourth of the total—1,450,000 out of 4,450,000?—Yes, nearer one-third than one-fourth.

2295. What is the proportion of Unionist members to Nationalist members?—They have 83 and we have 20—18, and the two University seats.

2296. So you have about one-fifth, and your proposition is about one-fourth or rather more?—Yes, about one-third.

2297. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) You ought to have about 27 members?—Yes, or 30. If the Redistribution Scheme took place on the system of the present number being maintained for Ireland, I think the Unionists would gain in numbers. If, on the other hand, it came to the same proportion as England, and Scotland, the Nationalists would lose, and we would lose, but we would gain on the balance in proportion. Our proportion would be better.

2298. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) You think you have about seven members fewer than your exact proportion, and you think that by a fair scheme of redistribution you could get equal representation of both parties according to the numbers?—I think so; we ought to have 12 more at least.

The witness withdrew.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

Thursday, 1st July 1909.

PRESENT :

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right. Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.
The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

The Right Hon. The LORD EVERSLEY called and examined.

The witness handed in the following memorandum :—

MEMORANDUM ON PROPOSED SCHEME FOR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, BY LORD EVERSLEY.

I have at different times in the course of my Parliamentary life given much attention to the subject of minority or proportional representation. So long ago as 1867, when the Reform Bill was under discussion, I strongly opposed the application of minority representation to the three-membered constituencies. In 1884, when the subject was again mooted in the Press in prospect of the Reform Bill of that year, and the scheme of the Single Transferable Vote was recommended, I wrote an article in one of the Monthly Reviews, pointing out the objections to it, which was reprinted and circulated by the National Liberal Federation. As a member of the Committee of the Government charged with the preparation of the Reform and Redistribution Bills of 1884 and 1885 I had a share in responsibility for rejecting the scheme, and for the general adoption of single-membered constituencies. The result of the two experiments made by Parliament in the direction of minority representation, both of which have since been discarded, confirmed me in my views against the principle.

The first of these experiments was that in the Reform Act of 1867, when the principle of minority representation was applied to the 12 constituencies returning three members, under a scheme by which two votes only were given to each elector, a scheme which was intended to secure to the minority of these constituencies one of the three members. The clause was first proposed in the form of the cumulative vote, in Committee of the Reform Bill, by Mr. Lowe, supported by Mr. J. S. Mill, Lord Cranborne (afterwards Lord Salisbury), and Mr. Fawcett. It was strongly opposed by Mr. Disraeli (then at the head of the Government) and by Mr. Bright. The speeches made on that occasion are eminently worthy of attention, even at the present time, for they bring out very clearly the two opposing principles.

Mr. Lowe said, "He did not argue for any protection of the minority, but as a matter of justice to it. He contended that the tendency of the present systems was to make that stronger which was already strong, and that weaker which was already weak. . . . He considered that the days of party were over. He did not believe that Parliament could by any contrivance whatever so manipulate matters that, with the franchise wholly in the hands of the poorer class of householders, it could raise up any party for a moment successfully to resist the will of that class in whatever they may set their mind upon. It would at all events give some variety of representation in danger of disappearing by the low level adopted. It would be an advantage to put such a thing in the power of the intelligence and prosperity represented by the minority of a borough." Mr. Mill regarded the proposal as "an insignificant makeshift—a makeshift, however, not without considerable real efficacy,

"and resting in part upon the same principle upon which Mr. Hare's system of personal representation was founded. The principle which he enunciated was that any body of persons who are united by any ties, either of interest, or of opinion, should have or should be able to have, if they desire it, influence and power in the House of Commons proportionate to that which they exercise out of it. . . . His own opinion was that any plan for the representation of minorities must operate to a very great degree to diminish and counteract the tyranny of majorities. He wished to maintain the just ascendancy of majorities, but this could not be done unless minorities were represented. . . . The true majority could only be maintained if all minorities were counted."

Mr. Fawcett looked upon it as an experiment likely to lead hereafter to some great philosophic scheme which would enable a pure democracy to work with all its advantages and to counteract all its disadvantages.

Mr. Disraeli, in reply, said that "If the principle was good you must apply it to all constituencies, if bad, why to any? . . . He was not prepared to enter upon a campaign to carry out a system which, as far as he understood it, was alien to the manners and conditions of the country—a proposal opposed to any sound principle, and the direct effect of which would be to create a stagnant representation, which would bring about a feeble executive. If the scheme should be applied to the vast majority of constituencies, almost all the representatives for the United Kingdom would be reduced to the position of nominees. They would not be elected by a free people in the light of heaven, but would be nominated as much as were the members for all those boroughs extinguished in 1832, and at a general election you would be able to calculate with exact precision and painful accuracy on the return of members elected by thousands of persons just the same as agents could formerly calculate on the return of members for Old Sarum. He had always been of opinion that this cumulative voting and other schemes having for their object to represent minorities that they were admirable schemes for bringing crotchetty men into the House. They are the schemes of coteries, not the politics of nations, and, if adopted, would end in discomfiture and confusion."

Mr. Bright made a most powerful speech against the whole principle of minority representation. In the course of it he said, "Every Englishman ought to know that anything which enfeebles the representative power and lessens the vitality of the electoral system, which puts power in the nominees of little cliques, here representing a majority and there a minority, but having no real influence among the people—any system like that, weakens and must ultimately destroy the power and force of the executive Government. . . . A principle could hardly be devised more calculated to destroy the vitality of an electoral

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[Continued.]

"system and to produce stagnation, not only of the most complete, but of the most fatal character, affecting our public affairs." He illustrated his argument by the case of the United States, and said that if the system of representing minorities had been in existence there during their civil war, its Government would never have been borne up, as it was, by the entire people, and would never have possessed sufficient power to suppress the desperate rebellion.

The proposed clause was rejected by a majority of 314 to 141. It was inserted in the form in which it ultimately passed by the House of Lords, at the instance of Lord Cairns, supported by Lord Russell and many of the Whig Peers, and weakly opposed by the representatives of the Government. The majority of Peers in favour of it was 142 to 51. On the return of the Bill to the House of Commons the clause was opposed by Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Goschen but was unwillingly supported by the Government in deference to the strong expression of opinion in the House of Lords.

In 1870, the second experiment of minority representation was made in the Education Act of that year, in the elections of school boards, in the form of the cumulative vote. It was introduced into the Bill in the House of Commons on the motion of Lord Frederick Cavendish. His object was that by "giving facilities for the representation of all parties on the school board, a great part of the religious difficulty might be got rid of, because those who represented them would take care that the children of the minority received equal attention and equal justice with those of the majority."

Mr. Gladstone, on the part of the Government, assented to the clause, alleging that the main considerations which made the principle inadmissible, or inexpedient in parliamentary elections were not applicable in the case of school boards.

In the same year a Bill was introduced in the House of Commons for the repeal of the minority clause of the Act of 1867. It led to a long discussion in the course of which Mr. Disraeli while declining to undo an arrangement so recently come to, said, "My own feelings are not in favour of refined and fantastic arrangements for the representation of the people." Mr. Gladstone strongly supported the repeal of the clause. "The principle of parliamentary representation," he said, "is that we should recognise each constituency as being in itself an integer, and what we want in this House is to have the prevailing sense of the community. We do not want to have represented immature particular shades of opinion that may at one time prevail in it, but the sense of the majority which represents the whole community; because the community is in the spirit and sense of the constitution recognised as being in itself an integral quantity."

There was an equality of votes on the division, 181 on each side, and the passing of the Bill was negatived by a majority of five.

The two schemes thus adopted appeared to work satisfactorily for a time in accordance with the hopes of those who were responsible for them. It was only by degrees, and after the experience of several elections, that their defects became apparent. Of the 12 Parliamentary constituencies returning three members each to the House of Commons, the minorities in 10 of them always returned one of the three members. In Birmingham and Glasgow the majorities, which were very large, succeeded by very skilful organisation in returning all three members. It needed a majority of voters of over three to two to effect this. In the other 10 constituencies, where the majorities were not nearly so large, it was impossible for one party to return all three members. The effect of the scheme was that political life in these constituencies became stagnant and inert. The minority member finding himself secure in his seat, was interested in discouraging contests, and with that object neglected the party organisation. The minority of the electors found it very difficult to get rid of their minority member when it no longer trusted him. The prediction of Disraeli and Bright was fulfilled by the political apathy which

prevailed in these constituencies. The system became odious to the electors there. In 1885 the system was abolished with general consent, and the scheme of single-membered constituencies was substituted in the three-membered constituencies and elsewhere in counties and large towns. In the school board elections also the cumulative vote was found, as time went on, to work badly. It gave great opportunities and facilities for the representation of small cliques and sections of electors, and for the election of members with purely personal objects in view—men, to quote from an article of Professor Westlake,* a strong advocate of proportional representation in the form of the single transferable vote, "whose personal qualifications did not recommend them to the great body of electors and whose power for mischief was increased tenfold more than the power of any average candidate for good was increased by their election." The scheme was held in many quarters to be responsible for the gradual deterioration of the London School Board. The defect was due, not so much to the wasteful accumulation of votes given to popular candidates as to the facilities given for the election of representatives of cliques and sections. The scheme came to an end so far as England is concerned in 1902, when the Education Act of that year transferred the work of school boards to committees of county and borough councils, and no attempt was made to apply this or any other system of minority representation to the election of school committees or to the election of county and borough councils. The system is still in force in Scotland for the election of school boards. The advocates of proportional representation believe that they have now devised a scheme which will be free from the defects of their previous schemes, which they now admit to be open to grave objection. I think it will not be difficult to show that the scheme will have defects at least as serious as those which have gone before it.

Before doing so I will deal with some of the objections raised to the present system of voting. The principal objection is that it leads in most cases of parliamentary elections, to the over-representation of majorities, to the under-representation of the principal minority, and to the exclusion of smaller minorities. It is also said to be open to the possibility of a minority of the electors throughout the country returning a majority of members to the House of Commons. It is alleged by Lord Courtney that such a case actually occurred in the General Election of 1886, when he estimates that the figures for the whole United Kingdom, including a fair calculation for uncontested seats, gave a majority of 54,800 for Home Rulers, but with the result that a majority of 104 Unionist members were returned to the House of Commons. I cannot admit the conclusions which Lord Courtney has arrived at in this case.

Of the votes actually given in contests at that election a majority of rather over 68,000 were given to Unionist candidates—273 Unionists were returned in these contests and 170 Home Rulers. There was an unusual number of uncontested elections, 116 Unionists were returned by constituencies with rather over 1,000,000 of electors, and 111 Home Rulers by just under 800,000 electors.

I do not know by what process Lord Courtney estimates that the electors in these uncontested seats would have voted, so as to convert the majority of votes in the contested seats into a minority of the whole electorate. Whatever his method, it must be a mere guess, and cannot be set against the actual fact that a majority of votes were given to the Unionists in the contested elections, and that a majority of Unionist members were returned by the uncontested constituencies, representing a large majority of electors.

I will, however, admit that it is conceivable that a case might occur under our present system in which a minority of voters might return a majority of members. If, for instance, in rather less than one half of the constituencies one of the two parties should have a very large majority of votes in a

* "Contemporary Review," March 1884.

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General Election, and in rather more than one half of the constituencies the other party should have a very small majority, it is conceivable that the minority of the whole voters might return a majority of members, but it is extremely unlikely that such a case will occur, especially when the constituencies consist almost wholly of one-membered districts as is now the case. I do not believe that such a case has occurred in the past. It is, however, just as likely to occur, if not more so, if the constituencies, instead of being mainly one-membered, were so formed as to return five or seven members each. The only way of providing against such a remote possibility would be that the whole country should form a single constituency, voting on some such plan as that of the late Mr. Hare. Even in such a case it might well be that the number of independent members returned would disturb the relative position of the two main parties, and result in a minority obtaining a majority of seats.

The main objection, however, I presume, to the present system is that the majority as a rule returns a larger number of members than its numbers entitle it to; and that the minority does not succeed in obtaining the proportion of members due to its numbers. I fully admit that this is the general result of the present system, but I cannot regard it as a defect.

Without conceding Lord Courtney's method of estimating the results of uncontested elections, I will take his figures for other elections than that of 1886, for the uncontested elections do not much affect the results. He states that in the election of 1900 the majority of members proportional to votes given or estimated should have been 16 only—while the actual majority of members returned was 134. The majority of votes in 1895 was still less than in 1900—we may safely assume, therefore, that the proportional majority of members returned should have been about 11. It was, in fact, 150. In the 1886 election the majority of members returned in proportion to the voting should, according to my estimate, have been about 24. It was, in fact, 104.

It may be taken as certain from these figures, and the other figures given by Lord Courtney, that the effect of the present system is that majorities of members as a rule are considerably in excess of the number due on the aggregate of votes.

I cannot myself think that this is a defect in the system. On the contrary, it seems to me to be a distinct advantage. In four of the six cases, if the number of members returned had been in exact proportion to votes given, the Governments in these Parliaments would have been called into existence or maintained in power by very feeble majorities. They would have been liable to defeat at any moment through the defection of less than 12 of their least reliable supporters.

It must be recollected that the House of Commons is not merely a machine for legislation and a forum for discussion, but it is practically the governing power of the country. It selects from its members the Cabinet, which is the executive Government, and the Government thus formed is dependent on its majority in the House from day to day. If the two parties are nearly evenly divided in the House of Commons, if the difference in their numbers be very small, as would often be the case under a system of proportional representation framed so as to secure the exact proportion of members to the votes given to either party, it would certainly follow that the Government would be in a position of insecurity, liable to defeat at any moment upon any question on which a few of its supporters should vote against it. It would be impossible for a Government under these conditions to be vigorous and strong. It would be difficult for it to give effect to any policy. Of all the misfortunes which could overtake the country that of a weak executive unable to develop and maintain its policy, domestic or foreign, and liable to defeat at any moment, would be the worst, whichever party be in possession of the Government. When a great issue is before the country at a General Election a majority of a single vote must ultimately determine the question. It would be very undesirable that the Government called into existence by this majority of one vote of the whole country should be dependent on a majority of members in the same proportion.

Under the proportional system a Parliament would be returned in which the two parties would be almost equally balanced. The victors at the election would be powerless, and the result would be a weak executive dependent on a small majority which might be converted into a minority at any time by the action of a few waverers.

It may be doubted whether the constitution would long stand such a condition, and whether it would not be necessary to borrow from the United States the principle of electing the executive for a term of years by a direct vote of the electors as a whole, making it independent, so far as administration is concerned, of the Representative Assembly.

I might enforce this part of the argument by the observation that under the system of party government and party election, the opinion of the country is scarcely exhibited in its full force by the votes on either side given at a General Election. The ties of party are very strong. Very few men having once joined a political party care to change sides even when dissatisfied with the policy of their party. The defections are more in the direction of abstention, or the balance is changed by new voters taking their side for the first time for the candidate who wins the seat. There can be no doubt that in 1874, and again in 1886, the real weight of opinion against the Liberal Government of those days was far greater than was indicated by the majorities of votes at the poll, and similarly in 1880 and in 1906 the reactions of public opinion against the Tory Governments of Lord Beaconsfield and Mr. Balfour were far greater than was indicated at the poll, and were not to be measured by the majorities against them at the poll.

On the whole, therefore, I think it is a fortunate result of the present system that the majorities of members returned as a rule are in greater proportion than the aggregate votes in the constituencies entitle them to.

It is said of the present system that it results, or may result, in the majority of the House of Commons tyrannising over the minority. In my Parliamentary experience I have never observed anything of the kind. When the majority is very large there is always a tendency on the part of the more moderate members of it to break off and to join with the Opposition in defeating measures or administrative actions which are strongly objected to.

It is also said that there are large sections of the electors who do not secure representation under the present system. My experience is in the opposite direction. It seems to me that the representation in the House of Commons of late years has been very varied, and that one way or another every important interest in the country does succeed in obtaining representation in the House of Commons. I do not think, therefore, that any grievance can be sustained in the existing system of election, or that there is any justification for giving it up and adopting any scheme for artificially securing the representation of cliques and sections and for securing that the representation of the two parties shall be in exact proportion to the aggregate party votes in the General Election.

The system of proportional representation known as the single transferable vote will, I believe, have exactly the opposite effect. It will weaken majorities and will make it very difficult for them to obtain a representation even in proportion to their strength in the election. It will also give a very undue advantage to cliques and sections, and will secure to them in many cases a representation in the House of Commons which their numbers will not entitle them to.

To explain this it is necessary to suppose that the whole country is divided into constituencies returning members in sufficient numbers to give a fair trial to the system. The object aimed at is, in the words of Mr. Mill, "to enable any body of persons united by ties of interest or opinion" to combine together for the purpose of obtaining a share in the representation equal to their real strength in the country.

It will be obvious that three-membered constituencies would fail to secure this object. Only one minority could be represented in such constituencies.

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The working of the single transferable vote would practically be almost identical with the system adopted in the Act of 1867, and which proved by experience to be unsatisfactory. The only difference is that under the scheme of the transferable vote a majority of over three to one would be necessary in order that one party should return all three members, while under the scheme of 1867 a majority of over three to two sufficed for this purpose. It must be obvious, also, that the adoption of a general system of four-membered constituencies is out of the question. In such constituencies where the contest is between the two main parties the result in the vast majority of cases would be the return of two members of each party unless the voters of one party exceed those of the other by more than three to two—a proportion achieved in comparatively few Parliamentary contests. The four-membered constituencies would, therefore, give no verdict on the issues before the country. If the voters of one party should exceed the other in a greater proportion than three to two it might return three out of the four members.

The system must be applied, if at all, to constituencies returning each five or more members. I think also it must be obvious that it must be universally adopted. It could not in fairness, or with any prospect of being accepted, be proposed to adopt this system for Birmingham, which for many past General Elections has returned seven members of the same party, or for Liverpool, which till the last General Election returned, as a rule, eight members of one party and one only for the other, and not to apply the same system to Wales or to the Irish counties, where minorities seldom secure any representation.

The question, therefore, necessarily resolves itself into this, will it be desirable to divide the whole of the United Kingdom into constituencies returning each five or more members with the scheme of the single transferable vote? Let us consider the question with reference to five-membered constituencies. There would be 134 such constituencies in place of 630 single-member constituencies and about 20 two-membered constituencies as at present.

For the purpose of testing the scheme let us suppose a constituency with five members where 30,000 electors vote, and where, according to the scheme, 5,001 votes would be the quota ensuring election. It must be obvious that if the contest in such a case is between candidates of the two main parties—say Liberals and Conservatives—and if there be no candidate in the field independent of both parties, the contest will almost certainly be between three candidates of both parties, and the result will be that three members of the one and two of the other will be elected. To justify one of the main parties attempting to secure four out of the five members, it must outnumber in votes the minority in a proportion of more than two to one (e.g., in the case supposed, where the contest would be between four Liberal candidates and two Conservative candidates, the four Liberals would be returned if the votes were distributed as follows—Liberals, A (1) 5,001; A (2) 5,001; A (3) 5,001; A (4) 5,001. Conservatives, B (1) 5001; B (2) 4,996, showing a proportion of 20,004 Liberal votes to 9,996 Conservative votes, or more than two to one). To enable a majority to achieve such a result the party must be completely organised and subject to severe discipline. In practice it will be almost impossible to induce the whole party to vote *en bloc* for the ticket, and many a second, third, or fourth vote will be given to one or other of the opposite party, with the result of defeating the return of four out of the five members. A very much larger majority than two to one will be necessary to enable one of the two parties to return four out of the five members. Experience shows that the cases where a majority is in the proportion of more than two to one are extremely rare. In Ireland almost alone such a condition exists. The Nationalists in the greater part of rural Ireland will probably be able to return four out of five members in the constituencies in the south and west. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom the return will, with very rare exceptions, be three members of the one party and two of the other.

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If the majorities and minorities, under a system of five-membered constituencies, were evenly spread over the whole country, and the majority of the aggregate votes were a small one, as it was in the election of 1886, 1892, 1906, and 1900, it might well be that the majority of members returned by the dominant party will be greatly in excess of the members due to the proportion of votes given. There will be a majority in each of the 134 constituencies for the successful party. This result, however, will be prevented by the same cause which prevents the whole House of Commons being returned by one party under the present system, namely, that majorities and minorities are very unevenly spread over the country.

In the 1906 election the one-membered constituencies returned Liberal and Conservative members in the proportion of about 10 to 3. It may be assumed that about the same proportion would have prevailed in the five-membered constituencies, that is, that 10 such constituencies would have returned majorities of Liberals to three returning majorities of Tories. On this basis it seems probable that the majority of Liberals returned for the whole country would have been 66 in lieu of 104, the number due to the proportion of votes given, a result which would have been far remote from proportional representation.

The result, however, is arrived at on the assumption that the contest in each of the five-membered constituencies is between the two main parties, and that there is no disturbing element caused by the election, or even the candidature, of persons independent of both parties.

The very essence of the scheme is to encourage and enable independent sections of the constituency to assert themselves and to obtain a share in the representation in the House of Commons. We must, therefore, consider what will be the effect of a candidate independent of the two main parties, say a Socialist of an advanced type, antagonistic equally to both Liberals and Tories, obtaining a considerable number of votes. If such a candidate obtains 5,001 votes, or one more than one-sixth of the total votes given, he will be returned as member. The contest in such a case between the two main parties will be profoundly affected. There will remain four members for these two parties. It would almost certainly result that the four seats would be evenly divided between the two parties. It will be impossible for either of them to obtain a majority of the remaining four seats, that is, three out of the four, unless its votes exceed those of the other party in proportion of more than three to two, a proportion seldom attained in contests where there is no independent candidate, and which will be still rarer in contests where there is one independent candidate obtaining a sufficient number of votes to secure his return.

It may be confidently asserted that in all such cases the return will be two and two of the main parties, say two Conservatives, two Liberals, and one independent member. The constituency, therefore, on the main issue will give no verdict, and an equality of members will be returned; and if this should occur, as it is likely to occur, in a great number of constituencies, the result will be that the majority of the whole electors in the country, even where a large one, will be greatly hampered, and will find it very difficult to return a majority of members.

It is, however, further to be observed that in the event of the two main parties being very nearly evenly divided, the independent candidate will have a still greater advantage, and will in all probability be returned by a number of voters far less than the quota. It seems to be the general impression of the scheme that an independent member will only be returned if he obtains the quota, but this is not the case when the contest is between two main parties and there is an independent candidate in the field with a large number of supporters.

The scheme is so framed as to give an initial advantage to an independent candidate, for he will secure being returned as member if he obtains one sixth of the votes plus one, whereas he is only entitled to be returned, according to strict mathematical proportion, if

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he gets one-fifth of the votes. In its practical working, however, the advantage to the independent candidate will be much greater. Let us suppose the independent candidate obtains one eighth of the votes, or 3,750. If the two main parties are fairly evenly divided, and if they vote according to the scheme of preference for three candidates each, the voting may be somewhat as follows :—

				Total Votes.
Conservative candidates.	A. 5001	B. 5001	C. 2850	12,852
Liberal do.	D. 5001	E. 5001	F. 3396	13,398
Independent candidate.	G. 3750	—	—	3,750
				<u>30,000</u>

In this case G will be returned by one-eighth only of the votes given, and the two main parties will each return two members. It will be observed that there is a considerable margin for variation of the figures with the same result, and in fact an even less proportion of votes than one-eighth will secure the return of G if the two main parties are nearly evenly divided.

It would, indeed, in such case be possible for one of the two main parties to avoid such a result by abandoning the system of preference voting under the scheme of the transferable vote, and dividing its votes equally between its three candidates, a difficult but by no means impossible task. If, in the case under consideration, the Conservative party, which is generally better organised, were to adopt this course the result, with the same number of voters, for each party would be as follows :—

				Total.
Conservative candidates.	A. 4,400	B. 4,300	C. 4,150	12,850
Liberal do.	D. 5,001	E. 5,001	F. 3,398	13,400
Independent candidate.	G. 3,750	—	—	3,750
				<u>30,000</u>

In this case G. will not be elected, but the three Conservative candidates, with a minority of votes as compared with the Liberal candidates, will be returned as members.

The result of the poll might be slightly varied by A receiving more than the quota of votes and his excess votes being transferred to B or C, with the following result :—

				Total.
Conservatives	A. 5,001	B. 4,000	C. 3,849	12,850
Liberals	D. 5,001	E. 5,001	F. 3,398	13,400
Independent	G. 3,750	—	—	3,750
				<u>30,000</u>

The case might be further illustrated by the introduction of a second independent candidate. To whatever extent his votes are withdrawn from the two main parties, the return of one independent candidate with even a less proportion than one eighth of the votes given would be promoted. It may be said that an independent candidate obtaining about one tenth of the votes given would have an excellent chance of being returned if a second independent candidate with a fair support were in the field, and if the two main parties vote according to the scheme.

The result in such case might be as follows :—

				Total.
Conservatives	A. 5,001	B. 5,001	C. 2,600	12,602
Liberals	D. 5,001	E. 5,001	F. 2,400	12,402
Independent	G. 3,000	—	—	3,000
2nd Independent	H. 2,996	—	—	2,996
				<u>30,000</u>

In this case G. would be returned by 3,000 votes, or one tenth of the total number given.

Thoroughly to understand the working of the scheme it would be necessary to consider it with reference to larger constituencies returning say, seven, nine, or more members. In such cases the system would have greater play. It would afford a further opportunity to various interests and sections to claim and obtain a share in the representation. On the other hand, the two main parties would be under greater disadvantage, and it would be more difficult for the majority of them to obtain a working majority in the Parliament elected.

In a constituency returning nine members, the majority of voters, even when the contest is between two main parties unaffected by independent candidates, could rarely hope to return more than a bare majority of members, that is, five out of the nine. To secure six out of the nine members the majority must be greater than three to two, and with the certainty of independent candidates, and of cross voting of the second or third votes after the first or second preference, this would practically be impossible. An independent candidate could also be returned with far less than the quota, while there are cases in which two independent candidates could be returned with each two thirds only of the quota, while the average votes of the candidates of the two main parties would be greater.

I think it is impossible to come to any other conclusion on the scheme, than that it will very greatly favour the return of members representing cliques and sections of the electors, and will make it more difficult for a majority of the two main parties to assert itself and to obtain a working majority of members returned.

Let me now look at the practical working of the scheme in the ordinary conduct of the election in any constituency which is subject to it. I have already shown that in districts returning five members the contest will almost certainly be between three candidates of each of the two main parties and an independent candidate. In such case two candidates of both the principal parties will practically be certain of being elected, and the main contest will be between the third candidates of the two parties and the independent candidate. How under such conditions is the contest to be carried on? What will be the instructions or advice of the party organisers to their followers? If they advise their members to vote according to the order on party ticket, it must be recollected that there is no equality in the position on the ticket. The two first on the list, if the party follow the advice, will be absolutely certain of being elected, and the last alone will bear the brunt of the contest. Who would care to occupy the position on the ticket with two colleagues in a position of such security? If the party organisers give no such advice but recommend their followers to vote in the order of their own preference, it may well be that two of their candidates will run the risk of being defeated, but it is also probable that large numbers of the party will not understand the system, and will vote for the candidates in the alphabetical order in which they stand on the voting papers. The last in the alphabetical order will have a very poor chance. With respect to the order of preference, it should be recollected that a first vote is worth at least double a second vote, and a second vote worth very much more than a third vote. How are rival interests to be brought into harmony? There being no equality in the position on the ticket, it will not be possible to split votes or to give and take on equal terms. How could a canvas be conducted? How could candidates last on the party list be expected to canvas for themselves and their colleagues in this order? What opportunities for a candidate to play for his own hand!

Lord Courtney seems to think that the scheme will put an end to bribery. It seems to me that it will offer great inducements to it. Many an indigent voter who gives one vote to a popular candidate for conscience sake, might be induced to give his second vote for a consideration.

Hitherto in political contests one of the main objects of candidates has been by appeals on the plat-

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form or by personal persuasion to urge individual voters or special cliques of voters to subordinate their interests to those of the party and to vote for the member who on the whole best represents the public interest or is best qualified to fill the position of member. The very essence of the new scheme is the reverse. It invites and enables special interests and cliques to secure a separate representation. It will be an obvious manoeuvre of a party to start a candidate representing a special clique in order to draw second or third votes from their opponents. In fact, there will be endless opportunities for intrigue, manoeuvring, and trickery.

I have already pointed out that the scheme must be applied, if at all, to the whole of the country, and that it will be neither expedient or fair to pick out certain districts, say, large cities such as Liverpool, Birmingham, and Glasgow, and to emasculate majorities there, while leaving majorities in Wales or elsewhere to have their existing supremacy. The effect of applying the scheme to five, seven, or nine-membered constituencies all over the country would be to do away with a distinctive feature of our present system, namely, the representation of distinct communities. Towns such as Southampton, Portsmouth, Hull, Newcastle, and others, returning two members each, and some 70 other smaller towns returning one member each, would be merged in surrounding country districts and would lose their individuality. I attach great importance to the electoral entity of such constituencies and to the verdicts they give in General Elections. The new constituencies returning five members each would be of immense size and would be very unwieldy. The electors would be very remote from their member. The labour of candidates and members in keeping in touch with the electorate, already very great, would be much increased, especially in rural constituencies. I do not believe that such a redistribution of constituencies will commend itself to the country generally.

But the main objection to the scheme is that it would have exactly the opposite effect of the present scheme. It will tend to paralyze or weaken the majority of the whole electorate, prevent it obtaining the majority of members in proportion to the number of voters, and give facilities and opportunities to cliques and sections of electors to obtain representation in excess of what they are entitled to.

2299. (*Chairman.*) Since writing your memorandum have you followed the evidence which has been given before this Commission?—Yes, I have seen most of it.

2300. Is there anything you would like to add to your memorandum?—There is a little correction I want to make on page 4, in the fourth paragraph.* In explaining the possibility of a minority returning a majority of the members, I say "If, for instance, in "rather less than one half of the constituencies one "of the two parties should have a very large majority "in a General Election"—and it then goes on "and "in rather less than one half"—that should be "rather more." It is a mere verbal correction—it is quite obvious. It is quite possible in such a case, if, in a majority of the constituencies the one party has a very small majority and in a minority of constituencies the other party has a very large majority, that a minority may return a majority of members.

2301. Are there any other alterations you wish to make?—There are no other alterations.

2302. We have all gone through this memorandum, and I do not propose to ask you many questions upon it; but what we would chiefly like to know is, what in your opinion would be the general effect of the proposal for proportional representation?—I have given in my memorandum my reasons for objecting to it. I think it would over-represent minorities, sections, and cliques of the electors, and will under-represent majorities and make it more difficult for them to assert themselves. That is my general objection, and I think the objections have never been better stated than by Mr. Bright and Lord Beaconsfield in 1867.

2303. You do not think that the rise of a third party, such as the Labour or Independent Labour Party, has altered the situation at all?—No, I do not think so. Of course, it will make it in any case more difficult for a majority to assert itself, whatever system you have.

2304. You do not consider that the majority which obtains at present is out of all proportion to its support in the country?—No doubt the general tendency of the present system is to over-represent the majority. That, on the whole, I think, is an advantage. Of course, there may be cases in which one may think it is overdone, but it is rather difficult to say whether that is so. I think, as a rule, the majorities of electors in the country are not adequately represented at the elections, for the reasons that I stated in my memorandum. The system of party tends to prevent the full expression of the opinion of the majority of the country.

2305. Although the actual number of the majority may be in excess of their proportion, you think that they really reflect the opinion of the country?—I think they reflect the opinion of the country. I think in some of the elections that have taken place of late years the real opinion of the country was in a greater majority than the numbers indicated at the contested elections.

2306. Do you attach any importance to the return of Independent members who belong to no party?—I think Independent members obtain sufficient representation as it is.

2307. You would not welcome more?—I would not artificially attempt to represent them. My opinion is that practically almost every independent opinion is represented one way or the other in the House of Commons, and obtains through the present system, in one way or other, representation.

2308. Indirectly?—Yes, indirectly.

2309. You are very much in favour of maintaining the dual party system?—Yes.

2310. You think proportional representation would destroy that?—I think proportional representation is hostile to it. I do not say it would absolutely destroy it, but it would make it more difficult for the majority to assert itself. After all, the majority must govern, if it be only one. I think it is important that the Executive Government should be supported by a substantial majority.

2311. You do not think the size of the majority rather tends to make a Government autocratic?—No, I do not think so. My recollection of work in the House of Commons is that if the majority is very large there is always a tendency for a section of it to break off, and it prevents anything like autocracy.

2312. As a practical matter do you consider the difficulties in the way of proportional representation insuperable?—I think they are very great. I will not say they are insuperable. I think as a matter of machinery the thing can be worked out; the objections to it, I think, are very great.

2313. On that ground alone you would not base your opposition to it?—No, my opposition is mainly one of principle. I think it could be worked if desirable, but I believe that it would result in cliques and sections obtaining an undue advantage.

2314. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) I gather you would retain the single-member constituencies?—Yes. On the whole I should, myself, rather prefer double-member constituencies, but I do not think it would be possible to do away with the one-member constituencies. I would, however, retain the two-member constituencies which still exist.

2315. The evidence before us has condemned the two-member constituencies?—I may be old-fashioned in that respect, but I confess I rather like two-member constituencies. Take towns like Southampton, Portsmouth and Plymouth. I do not think it would be desirable to split them up into halves, each half returning one member.

2316. In your experience the two-member constituencies have not led to corrupt contracts and bargains?—No. I was a member of a two-member constituency for a great many years, and I think it had a certain advantage. It gave a certain play to both parties in the selection of their members. One member might be a local man, and another man a politician. One man

* Correction made.

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[Continued.]

might be an extreme man and another a more moderate man. In one-member constituencies the party has to decide which section of the party shall obtain representation; whereas in a two-member constituency, as I have said, one candidate may be a moderate man and another an extreme man, and if they are returned there is a certain variety in the representation.

2317. There were not many cases in your experience in which a bargain was made resulting in a Liberal and Conservative being returned for the same place?—No, but it did happen in the days of two-member constituencies that the representation was very often divided.

2318. That meant virtually disenfranchisement of the place?—Not exactly. I cannot say it meant disenfranchisement, but it was an equality of representation. Where the two parties were very evenly divided it might have a certain advantage.

2319. I had not intended to trouble you about the two-member constituencies, but to draw your attention to the difficulties which have arisen in the single-member

constituencies where representatives of three or four parties stand for one seat?—No doubt there are difficulties of that kind, and it has been proposed to meet them by means of a second election. On the whole I am rather against any of those schemes. There are difficulties, I admit, in the present system, but I think on the whole the system works better than it would work under a scheme of a second election.

2320. But I gather from your memorandum that you are very much in favour of representation based upon a majority of the votes?—Yes, I am.

2321. In the case I am referring to, the representation is too often held by a minority of the votes?—It does occur—I will not say very often—under the present system that in a constituency the minority may return the member in that way by one of the candidates being an independent man.

2322. While you condemn the second ballot, would you be prepared to accept the system of the alternative vote?—I think that is preferable, distinctly.

The witness withdrew.

LORD HUGH CECIL called and examined.

2323. (Chairman.) You were formerly Member of Parliament for Greenwich?—Yes.

2324. You are a member of the British Constitution Association?—Yes.

2325. On behalf of that Association you wish to put in a statement?—Yes.

The statement was handed in and is as follows:—

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE
BRITISH CONSTITUTION ASSOCIATION.

The subject of proportional representation was considered by the British Constitution Association Annual Conference, Oxford, July 13, 1907, at a lecture delivered to the association at the Whitehall Rooms by Lord Courtney of Penwith, on March 30, 1908, and at the Constitution Congress, London, August 7, 1908. At a meeting held on December 21, 1908, the following resolution was carried unanimously: "That, in view of the declaration of the Premier that he regards as a binding obligation on the Government that before this Parliament comes to an end it should submit a really effective scheme of electoral reform, the British Constitution Association urges upon the Government that no reform will be satisfactory which excludes the principle of proportional representation in the form of the single transferable vote in multiple constituencies."

(2) Statesmen are agreed that the aim of our Government should be to give expression to the will of the nation. As recently expressed by Mr. Haldane, "the progress of democracy is simply the process of fashioning the instrument of government of the State to the more adequate power of giving expression to the general desire. No government and no minister has the right to speak except for the larger interpretation of the will of the nation."

(3) The House of Commons in the resolution passed by a large majority in June, 1907, claimed to be the interpreter of the will of the people in an exclusive and final way. If the interpretation of the will of the people is to rest in any exclusive way with the House of Commons it is of vital importance that it should with approximate accuracy reflect public opinion.

(4) In practice, the only effective way which the people have of giving authoritative expression to their wishes is by their votes on the rare occasion of an election. Our present system of representation does not provide for any adequate expression of public opinion. Public opinion is extremely composite. If when considered collectively it be likened to white light, when considered from its constituent parts it should be regarded as the spectrum.

(5) No electoral reform can be of much value for securing a true reflection of the national will in Parliament while single-member constituencies are retained. Nor are there any longer adequate reasons

for their retention. Greater facilities of travel, the cheapening of the press, and universal education have removed certain grounds which formerly afforded more justification for representation by small localities.

(6) Progressive civilisation has led to greater complexity in modern affairs, and has increased the drawbacks of representation by single-member constituencies. While interests and opinions are not so sharply divided in accordance with locality, there is a greater diversity suffused through each constituency. It has, therefore, become less possible for one member to truly represent the whole of any locality.

(7) Single-member constituencies place a candidate in a position which is very detrimental to political affairs. The more conscientiously he attempts, if elected, to represent his constituency the more intolerable his position becomes. He is in effect asked at the same time to attend "to every passion, to every dislike, to every ambition, to every foolishness, to every prejudice, to every interest," and he is invited to conciliate them all.

(8) In a multiple constituency representation becomes *personal*, not *local*—that is to say, the representative is only called upon to represent those members of the constituency with whom his own opinions are more or less in accord; and he has the satisfaction of knowing that other shades of opinion will have their own representation in due proportion.

(9) The present system is unfavourable to the candidates with sincere and single-minded convictions, which is against thoughtful and sober-minded men being induced to take a more active part in politics, whether as candidates or otherwise. It is a matter of common observation that many are at present deterred by the belief that their influence could not find adequate expression under the present unsatisfactory system of representation.

(10) The present system does not even secure such advantages as should result from local representation. The injustice done to one locality is not compensated by that done to another. The injustice, for instance, of Unionists in Irish constituencies being represented by Home Rulers is not fully rectified by Irish Home Rule electors in England being unable to return any representative.

(11) But the evil of such misrepresentation as this is small compared to the ill-effects of maintaining a system which is unsuited to the purpose it is intended to serve. The greatest evil is that the government of the country is in no sense a reflection of the national will. The continuance of the system under circumstances to which it is not adapted has led to party interests taking the place of the people's wishes. Much concern at this growing evil was exhibited at the Constitution Congress to which reference has been made. Attention was drawn to how the party system had

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gradually led to one minister selecting all his colleagues in the Government; to himself and his nominees determining all the subjects that may be effectively legislated upon; to his authority settling the form of every Bill; to modifications being resisted as the price of party success; and to the greater part of each Bill being withdrawn from all comment or debate, by being passed in block, as the price of party existence. Such a dictatorship is not in the least justified by the fact that neither party has been willing to abrogate it because each might enjoy its power in turn.

(12) How truly this is the case was later shown by the Prime Minister in a speech on December 11th last, when he said one of the main functions of a Prime Minister in these days is to receive deputations. From all quarters and in all causes they have come to him. As they came one after another he recognised in them some of his most loyal and stalwart supporters, men who had patiently submitted to the postponement of their own special and cherished ideals, session after session, for the exigencies of discipline and common policy, and to none of whom was it easy to deny the preferential treatment that one and all demanded.

(13) Professor Lawrence Lowell, President of Harvard University, in his recent careful and scholarly examination of the political situation in England, shows that he was impressed by this feature of British politics. He came to the conclusion that probably the most serious menace to which British institutions are exposed is that arising from the bidding for the support of classes of voters by legislation for their benefit. With the removal of privileges and the restrictions imposed by earlier legislation, he points out, the character of the demands has changed, and the classes that ask for positive legislation are apt to seek something that is essentially in the nature of privilege. (*v.* "The Government of England," p. 531 *et seq.*)

(14) Objection is sometimes taken to proportional representation on the ground that it opens the way to a group system which is contrary to the traditions of British Government, but the evils of the group system already exist without that frank recognition of them which would evoke the antidote. There is no necessary affinity between the interests or the aims which range themselves under this or that banner, according to the inducements held out. But discipline is maintained owing to the fact that such practical insubordination as would endanger the Government's existence would equally jeopardise any prospect of the fulfilment of the hope of each group.

(15) On the other hand, a dissatisfied group may make use of this possibility as a threat against the Government in its endeavour to make its own will prevail. An illustration was recently afforded at the Annual Conference of the West Wales Baptists at Llanelly on June 15. A resolution was carried expressing profound regret at the withdrawal of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill, and referring to the broken pledges of the Government in the face of the long-continued devotion and loyalty of Wales to the Liberal Party. It was said to be time they considered their relations with the Liberal party, and an amendment was moved to the effect that unless the Bill received precedence next session their support as a body should be withdrawn from the Government.

(16) The first essential to nomination by a party is loyalty to the party. This does not secure government in accordance with the national will. One of the most marked effects of the system is that Governments hold office in virtue of a negative declaration on the part of the electorate. For a long time a dominant factor in keeping the Unionist Party in office was the proposal of their opponents to confer Home Rule on Ireland. At the last election the dominant factor (so the Prime Minister has declared) was Tariff Reform. Incidentally the positive policy of a Government pursued under pressure of its active constituent groups creates malaise, which equally produces a negative result. So far from the electorate being fickle, it is its resentment at the unstable course of government which

is displayed. So far from the present method being necessary to stable government, it is the source of instability, for instead of producing a reflection of the national will it produces conditions under which the Government have against them not only the interests which are opposed to them, but that great mass of the electorate that does not seek privileges or wish to confer them on particular sections of the community.

(17) The single transferable vote in multiple constituencies should render party government more stable by affording the opportunity of the selection of those candidates who most nearly reflect the views of the electors, and thus showing to the Government, to the extent that it was effective, where the centre of gravity really lay. There would be some possibility, which does not at present exist, of a Government pursuing a policy which it *knew* had public opinion behind it, and of having the assurance that its consistent policy commanded the support of the majority in the country.

(18) The antipathy to proportional representation which is displayed by some party organisers is significant, and recalls experiences in the United States, where the management of party organisations on rigid lines originated and developed. So jealous are they of their exclusive powers that party organisers have preferred to see their opponents successful rather than lose their dictatorship.

(19) Proposals which have been made for the introduction of the alternative vote in single-member constituencies would not be satisfactory. It is welcomed by some party organisers as strengthening their position by removing the threat on their monopoly when a third candidate enters the field. But it would do little to reflect more accurately the will of the people.

(20) Greater importance attaches to proportional representation in Parliament than in other forms of election. The issues are graver and more complicated. It would, therefore, be unsatisfactory if proportional representation were not applied in the first instance, and without delay, to the election of members of the House of Commons.

(21) As a beginning it would probably be undesirable to have very large constituencies. The political customs to which the electorate is used can only be expected to change slowly. For this reason no great revolution from the introduction of proportional representation need be apprehended. The most that can be expected is to open the way to a sounder method. As the benefits became recognised the demand for larger constituencies could readily be met by amalgamation. But from the first constituencies should consist of not less than seven to ten representatives, with perhaps more in the great urban centres. There is no just ground for leaving a large number of electors without representation because they chance to live in thinly-populated districts; or, for the same reason for limiting the scope necessary to secure an adequate reflection of opinion in a district.

(22) It cannot be too clearly stated that the object of proportional representation is to secure as exact a reflection as possible of the general desire, and not to give minorities a representation to which they are not entitled.

(23) Members of the Association have assisted in and conducted trial elections under the system advocated—among others, the chairman of committee at Hampstead, and Mr. Arthur Hughes, member of committee at Beccles. They have not found that those taking part have experienced any difficulty in understanding it or in carrying it out successfully.

(24) National politics should be the noblest vocation, and it cannot be doubted that the discredit which attaches to them in the minds of many is largely owing to the existing system of election producing a condition of affairs which renders impossible that true reflection of the will of the nation which it is the aim of constitutional institutions to secure.

MARK H. JUDGE, *Chairman.*

S. HUTCHINSON HARRIS,

23, Charing Cross,
July 1st, 1909.

Deputy-Chairman.

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2326. Do you consider that the present system of election of members to the House of Commons is satisfactory?—No.

2327. I gather your chief reason for thinking that the present methods are unsatisfactory is that it is greatly weakened as an organ of free discussion?—Yes, that is the first reason.

2328. Do you think the present system tends to exaggerate the power of the party organisation?—The intensity of party feeling within the House of Commons—the rigidity of the party system.

2329. The members belong to one or other of the big parties, and rigidly adhere to the party discipline imposed upon them?—Yes, and the majority being very large generally, the very small number of members who are at all independent have no weight or only an insignificant weight.

2330. As a consequence, the discussions in the House of Commons lapse into a trial of endurance between the two parties?—To a large extent.

2331. Obstruction on the one hand and the closure on the other?—Yes. One evidence of it is the frequently empty condition of the House. People do not think it worth while to attend the discussions at all.

2332. In your experience would you say that discussion has ever influenced a division in the House of Commons?—Not on a great party issue, except when a new issue arises like the fiscal question was, to some extent, in the last Parliament.

2333. But, ordinarily speaking, the discussion practically never results in a change of opinion?—No, not on a party issue.

2334. You say in your memorandum that if proportional representation were adopted majorities would be smaller?—Yes.

2335. And would in all probability contain a somewhat larger number of members who are open to conviction, and who are not rigidly drilled partisans?—Yes.

2336. Have you considered the possible effect of the majority being comparatively small under such a system?—Yes.

2337. You do not consider that that would entail any evil consequences?—That is so. I think the balance would be decidedly on the side of gain. The branch of politics in which it is most undesirable to have an uncertain executive government is foreign politics, and in a less degree Colonial politics. In both those branches of politics there is a growing tendency to lift them out of party conflict. Accordingly it would not be a very serious mischief that the party majority was not a very large or a very rigid one. To a large extent a government can nowadays count on the more moderate of its opponents on those questions. In domestic politics I do not think it would be mischievous that the majority should be an uncertain one. It is quite true that in modern times domestic defeats have been deemed to be great party disasters, and have seriously weakened the government, but that is quite a modern tradition—a tradition within the last 30 or 40 years certainly. In old times, in Lord Palmerston's Government, there was a very small majority and the Government was very frequently beaten on the smaller questions, but that did not seriously interfere with the government of the country or seriously weaken its administration.

2338. Then you think it would be possible to revert to the old tradition that a small defeat, say in Committee of Supply, need not necessarily mean the resignation of the Government?—Certainly, I think it would be easy to revert to it.

2339. But at present the system is when a defeat of that kind occurs for a Government to resign?—Yes, or at any rate they are very much shaken.

2340. You do not think the effect of proportional representation would be the creation of groups?—No, not formal groups. What I should desire to occur, and what I think would, to some extent, occur is the return of a certain number of members who would belong to one or other of the great parties, but who would not be absolutely party men.

2341. It is conceivable that each of the big parties, say Liberals and Conservatives, might be divided into

three or four subsections?—Yes, it is conceivable, but I do not think it is likely, because I think the tendency of cohesion is so very strong in any case. Englishmen are so predominantly practical, and the necessity of keeping one party in power operates now so very strongly that I do not think there would be a serious tendency to break up into groups. It is observable, even in the present Parliament, where there are nominal groups, that the Labour party is only a little less trustworthy on party questions than those who are nominally pure Liberals.

2342. But under proportional representation men would be returned as members of their particular group and not of the main party as they are now?—Occasionally, as now, there would be a group like the Labour party; but I do not see why there should be more groups than there are now. The constituencies would be fought by the same sort of organisations, and in the same sort of way as they are now. The only thing is that in particular cases a single member might get in who had not the support of the regular party organisations, or what would more probably happen is that he would not be so strongly pressed because it would be known that he could get in without the support of the party organisations.

2343. Do you think the actually independent member would have more chance of being returned under a system of proportional representation?—Yes, I do.

2344. One who belongs to no party?—Yes, or one who is loosely attached to a party.

2345. Do you consider that desirable?—Yes, I do.

2346. You do not think it would introduce into the House of Commons numbers of people who might be described as faddists?—I do not think there would be any serious increase in that direction. Even now faddists may be easily elected to Parliament, because their fads commonly lie outside the general path of party controversy, and the great parties do not care whether a man has a fad or not; if on other grounds he is a good candidate he gets in.

2347. That brings us to the fact which I suppose you will admit, that practically all sections of the community are represented, perhaps indirectly, in the House now?—All sections of opinion, do you mean?

2348. Yes, would not you say so?—I should hardly say so now, I think. I should say on the contrary a very large and important section of the community never get effectually represented; I mean the considerable section that lies between the two parties. They are always being driven to choose between one set of more or less extreme partisans and the other. Their mind is most imperfectly represented. For example, take the education question. I have very little doubt that an important, perhaps a predominant, section of the community would like to see the education question settled by some settlement which lies between the Act of 1902 and the Bill of 1906; but it is very little likely that a Parliament will be elected under the present system ever to give effect to that opinion.

2349. You mean the extremists on either side?—The machine now oscillates, and, what is rather curious and interesting, tends more and more to oscillate between the two violent extremes, because the longer one violent extreme can maintain power the stronger is the reaction against it. If the majority of the last Parliament had not been so largely in one direction, the majority in this Parliament would not have been so large in the other, because the last Parliament would not have been able to hold on so long, and the reaction would not have been so great.

2350. You illustrate it by the swing of the pendulum?—It operates precisely in that way.

2351. Would that be lessened by proportional representation?—Yes, I think so, because there would be a majority, let us say, of 30, and that majority would fall to pieces when the Government began to grow unpopular, so there would not be so much time for it to grow very unpopular, and therefore the reaction would not have time to gather very great strength, and there would be only a corresponding majority of 20 or 30 on the other side.

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2352. You do not think the Government of the day, relying on a small majority, would try and effect more compromises than it does at present, and try and conciliate the different sections which compose its majority?—It might do so, but I do not think that would be mischievous. It is very difficult to say really how that would work.

2353. Your second main argument is that the relations between the two Houses would be very much improved?—Yes.

2354. You think the House of Lords would be more prepared to take the verdict of the House of Commons as representative of the country?—Yes, or rather one of two things: either the House of Commons would have a decided opinion or it would not. If it had a decided opinion, then it would probably correspond to a decided opinion of the country, and the House of Lords would give way to it. If it had not a decided opinion it would itself make concessions, so that the prospect of friction would be considerably diminished.

2355. You refer to the fact that all politicians are accustomed to look elsewhere than to divisions in the House of Commons for indication of the true trend of public opinion. I gather from that that you do not consider the House of Commons invariably reflects the opinion of the country?—No; I should say rather less and less as the majorities get more and more rigid, and are less and less affected by the pressure of opinion outside. Therefore there is a permanent unreality in the constitution, which implies that the House of Commons derives its authority from the circumstance that it is the Commons by representation. As soon as it comes to be known that it is not the Commons by representation its authority is diminished or destroyed.

2356. Do you consider that the scheme of proportional representation would tend to increase the interest in politics generally throughout the country?—I do not think it would make much difference.

2357. What effect do you think it would have on the party organisations? Do you think it would tend to make them stronger or weaker?—I do not think there would be much change there either. They are already so very complete and perfect, at any rate in most urban constituencies, that they could not be very much improved. Of course, it would be necessary to have an effective organisation to work the system.

2358. Do you think the tendency would be for the party organisers to draw up lists of candidates for whom their party men should vote?—Yes, I think that would happen.

2359. And do you think they would vote by ticket?—You mean, would the electors vote by ticket—not always; but they would to some extent.

2360. You do not consider that the practical difficulties in the way of conducting an election would be insuperable?—No, I do not. There would be no difficulty, I am confident, in the towns at all in making it intelligible to the electorate. In the country it might be difficult at first, but they would soon get to learn it.

2361. Would you be prepared to adopt this system first of all in the large towns?—Yes, so far as that goes, the way I should propose to adopt it would be this: I would adopt it as a single transferable vote as a universal rule. That would leave unchanged the boroughs that return now either one or two members; but the counties—the great counties and the great towns—I would lump into constituencies corresponding to those that existed before 1885 as far as possible, in order to violate local feeling as little as possible. In London I would have what are often called the School Board boroughs restored and in that way, I think, as little dislocation would be made as possible. I would not combine with the introduction of proportional representation a redistribution of seats of the ordinary character, founded on numerical proportions between the different constituencies, because I think the double change made in one Act of Parliament would be too unpopular and too disagreeable to local feeling.

2362. That is only because of the difficulty of carrying it out?—Yes.

2363. But ultimately you would like to see it?—Ultimately I should like to see a fair measure of redistribution.

2364. What limit in the minimum and maximum number of members ought to be adopted?—I think not fewer than four, and not more than 10.

2365. You do not wish to have any rigid system?—No, I would adopt it as far as possible to local wishes.

2366. In large areas, thinly populated, you would still be prepared to adopt the system; for instance, the Highlands of Scotland?—They are an instance. When I first introduced the system I should leave the Highlands of Scotland what they are now—single-member constituencies; that is to say, I should not attempt to lump Sutherland with Inverness and Caithness, because the system would not then work, but ultimately I think it would be wise to clump the whole of the Highlands of Scotland into a single constituency; but that could not be done at first.

2367. Do you attach any importance to the close connection now existing between member and constituency?—The good side of it only is seen, I think, in quite small constituencies in the single-member boroughs, which are sometimes still found. When constituencies grow beyond that point I do not think there is so much advantage in it. It merely means that the member subscribes to a certain number of local charities, cricket clubs, and the like. I do not think there is much personal relation of a healthy character now.

2368. That, you admit, would be destroyed?—Yes, what there is of it would be destroyed.

2369. But you do not consider that would be an evil?—Not an evil of serious magnitude.

2370. You consider it necessary, I suppose, for the member to be acquainted with his constituency, and for his constituents to have reasonable opportunity of knowing him?—Yes.

2371. Would that be possible under a large constituency arrangement?—Yes, I think so, in so far as it is possible now. It is quite impossible now that he can personally know more than a very small proportion of his constituents; but there is no reason why people should not have access to him from a large as well as a small constituency—people who have grievances or points to represent.

2372. But the time of a member of Parliament now surely is occupied almost to a maximum?—But is there any reason for thinking that the member for Romford, who represents 30,000 electors, is substantially more burdened than the member for Carlisle, representing whatever it is, say 6,000.

2373. If he wishes to let the electorate have the same means of access to him he would be?—That would be assuming that personal access is very often asked, but I should have thought it was not often asked. There are a good many letters to answer and things of that kind; but I do not recollect, when I was in Parliament, that a very large number of my constituents wanted to see me personally.

2374. As to the question of the expense of contesting these large constituencies, do you think that is a serious drawback to their adoption?—I think it is a drawback. Of course, the ordinary party man would not feel that difficulty very much; he would stand as one of three or four candidates and the expense would be divided among them, and they would have a common campaign; but the independent candidate would undoubtedly be rather heavily handicapped, and I should be inclined to favour a measure of relief from public funds towards election expenses. I think certainly the returning officer's expenses ought to be provided out of public funds, and I see no reason why, now that expenses are all now scrutinised and returned, not the whole of them, but a proportion of them should not be borne by public funds, subject to this safeguard, that a man should only get expenses paid to him in proportion to the number of votes given to him, so as to prevent wild-cat candidatures which had no support, relying on public funds to bear the expense.

2375. That would be an effective method of preventing bogus candidates too?—Yes. If he only got 100 votes, or whatever it was, he would get

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practically no money, but a genuine candidate, I think, ought to have part of his expenses borne out of public funds.

2376. The unavoidable expenses you suggest being borne by the public funds?—Yes.

2377. But they bear a very small proportion to the actual expenses?—True; I would give a contribution, as it were, towards the expenses which are in fact compulsory in a non-corruptly conducted campaign.

2378. As a practical difficulty it has been suggested to us that under this scheme no very sensible method has been adopted for by-elections; have you any suggestions to make on that point?—No, I have no suggestion to make, but I should not regard that as a very serious drawback. It is quite true that by-elections would probably be fought much as they are now.

2379. But the practical difficulty of conducting a by-election in a place like, say, Glasgow, where the whole constituency would have to be polled, would be very great?—It would be no greater than it used to be before 1885.

2380. That was on the restricted franchise?—Not in towns. There would be a certain difficulty in a very large constituency, but I do not think it would be an insuperable one.

2381. A witness suggested that the candidates in the order in which they came out on the poll should have the option of choosing the particular portion of the constituency as their particular part to represent; that is to say, there should still be the same electoral areas although the votes given should be over the whole district. Does that commend itself to you?—I should like to consider it, but on the face of it I think it sounds too artificial a system.

2382. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) The ultimate object would be that a by-election would only take place for the district for which the elected member had elected to sit. It is a suggested remedy for getting over the difficulty in the case of Glasgow, &c.?—Yes, I see it would be convenient, no doubt.

2383. (*Chairman.*) Of those systems which you have considered, do you consider the transferable vote the best?—Of those I have considered, yes; but perhaps I have not considered all.

2384. Have you considered the alternative vote for three-cornered contests in single-member areas?—Yes, you might adopt that to meet the difficulty of by-elections as a special provision for those elections in single-member constituencies, but it would not effect the object I have principally in view, of making the House of Commons really correspond with the opinion of the electorate.

2385. But it would not be antagonistic to the single transferable vote?—No, you could have the two quite well.

2386. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Your chief ground for supporting a change is the influence on the character of the House of Commons?—That is my first ground.

2387. You point out quite truly that at present a majority is a rigid one, and that government by discussion has come to an end?—Well, it has been very much weakened.

2388. Do you think the cause, or the main cause, is the two party system?—No, I should say the two party system might quite well be worked with free government by discussion.

2389. In fact it was argued that if you took the Parliaments of the younger Pitt you had there a large body of opinion nominally Whig or Tory, but still independent, and more or less a jury to listen to the evidence and decide?—Yes, and even later, in Lord Palmerston's Government, there was a very important body of members who were substantially independent.

2390. So it is not the break up of the party system that you look to solve the difficulty?—No.

2391. Would you, as a matter of fact, welcome the breaking up of the two party system?—No, on the whole I should not.

2392. But you do advocate a change in the electoral system on the ground that it would weaken the party tie?—Yes; the first and most important thing is that it

would diminish the size of the majorities. I think a very large majority is an extremely mischievous thing.

2393. I do not quite see how you expect the party tie to be less strong with a small majority than with a large one?—Not because the majority is a small one, but because I think a certain number of independent, or more or less independent, members might get elected under a proportional representation system.

2394. It is not entirely a case of the size of the actual majority, but it is the constitution of that majority?—It is both. There is no advantage in having 10 independent members if your majority is 200, but if your majority is 25 it begins to be very important.

2395. So you look to the combination of a small majority and a large body of independent opinion?—A somewhat larger body. I should not think in any case it would be very large.

2396. Do you think under a proportional representation system you will get a larger body of independent opinion?—Yes, I think so. I agree that it is not so plain as the other point that the majority would be smaller.

2397. On what do you base that opinion?—It would be possible for a single candidate to get people to put his name first on personal grounds, or the like, in a large constituency, so that he would be elected.

2398. I think you said you did not think a change in the electoral system would much affect the party system?—No, I do not think it would.

2399. If that is so, surely the ultimate decision in choosing a candidate will be a party question and a party decision?—Yes, but the advantage is this: For example, let us suppose that Mr. — stood for Manchester; he would much more easily get in under a proportional system of election than he would under the present system, I think.

2400. Do you mean if he stood individually as an independent, or if he were adopted on one or other of the party lists?—No, I am supposing that he could not get himself adopted on either party list. He would yet have a better chance in a larger constituency under the proportional representation system, because a great many electors would be prepared to put him high on their list, and so he would have an opportunity of being elected.

2401. Do you think he would have a better chance than in the case of a large number of single member constituencies of all sorts, classes, and conditions?—Yes, I do, unless you can completely change the representative system, and have representation of classes, as you have to some extent in the universities, which no doubt does operate in that direction. I think single member constituencies have the party system as intensely as possible, not only because of the question of proportional representation, but also because in a narrow area party feeling rises higher and party organisation becomes intense.

2402. On the other hand, in a narrow area the personal element is intensified?—That is so in very small constituencies. It is not so when you get to 10,000 or even 5,000 electors, I should think.

2403. Then you do not think Mr. Gladstone's idea has been fulfilled, that a large number of single member constituencies would give the best variety and the best chance for the play of opinion?—No, I think in the old system, before 1885, where there were boroughs quite small, with perhaps 1,000 electors, such boroughs were no doubt largely under personal influence.

2404. To come back to Mr. —, you think if he stood as an independent he would get a fair chance of being returned, say, in Manchester?—At any rate a better chance than he would now.

2405. Have you studied the Belgian figures at all?—No.

2406. There, where the conditions are something like ours—two large parties, the Clericals and the Socialists—each party has to make up a list; and there, as far as we have seen the figures, the independent member comes out very badly when he stands individually, and the only chance of his getting returned is by being included in a party list?—Is the system there a single transferable vote system?

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[Continued.]

2407. No, it is the list system?—That is not so favourable.

2408. It is not so favourable at first sight, but do not you think the effect of the party system on the single transferable vote would result in the formation of informal lists by each of the two big parties?—Yes, I think it would probably tend to it, but I do not think the electorate would absolutely adhere to the lists.

2409. You do not think the party system is stronger than any electoral system?—It is difficult to state the thing so generally as that. I think the party system would break down more often than it does now. I do not at all deny that it would still be very powerful, perhaps more powerful than it ought to be, but I think there would be a gain.

2410. And the gain would be the return of the independent member?—Or the loosely attached member, is perhaps the better expression.

2411. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) The semi-independent member?—Yes.

2412. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Would he be attached to the group who sent him there as closely, or more loosely than the ordinary party man is to his party?—I think he would probably be a person who got elected because he interested the electors personally, and therefore he would not be tightly attached in any way; but let me say that my hope goes rather beyond those who would be now classed as independent or *quasi* independent members. When a Bill comes before Parliament even now, it is often found that there are 10 or 20 members who are more or less dissatisfied. Now as to those 10 or 20 members who could not be really classed as independent, speaking of their usual Parliamentary action, but are a little independent on a particular issue, their opinion goes for nothing; they are simply borne down by the weight of the majority. In a proportionally elected House they would have great weight. They might even have decisive weight, and accordingly you would never have very extreme measures passed, and that is one of the things I desire to see.

2413. But on the other hand you have certain disadvantages. You have the Government looking more to the future—to the next election—and attending less to legislation and more to its future position?—One of the advantages of the system of small majorities would be that a Government would fall, so to speak, soft. They would mind the prospect of defeat much less vehemently than they do now, because they would know it would mean only a defeat by a small majority and a proximate return to office. Now a Government holds on to the last moment, partly from patriotic motives that they think the party who will succeed it will be likely to be extreme and powerful, and partly because they see a long term of opposition for them. So with their supporters; so many supporters of a Government are likely to lose their seats at each general election under the present system that there is an immense element of cohesion in the party majority from fear of a General Election.

2414. Would that act if the party was composed of groups?—If the oscillation of the pendulum was very much reduced, if one party had 30 majority on one side, and in the next Parliament there was 30 on the other, it is obvious only 30 members would lose their seats, and therefore there would be smaller apprehension in the minds of members of Parliament when a general election was at hand, and less tendency to hang on to the last moment, which is one of the great mischiefs of the present system.

2415. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Really, the difficulty I feel is as to whether the independent member, the man of independent thought, will, or will not, find his way into the party list. If he succeeds in getting into the party list, I recognise that he would be a very valuable asset to the House of Commons. If he does not succeed in getting into the party list, I am not sure that he will ever make his appearance in the House of Commons, except on very rare occasions?—You do not think he would have a better chance. My suggestion is, that putting it as low as you please, he would have a better chance in a large town with five or six members, standing on his personal claims of

getting a vote here and a vote there, under a proportional system, than he would now in any single member division of a large town.

2416. Of course it is impossible to say, but I am apprehensive that his chances of election would not be greatly improved under the proportional representation scheme. You think they would?—Yes, I think they would.

2417. If they are not, then we are going through a great deal to get very little?—As I say, I think they would be; but it is a thing that is almost impossible to be sure of until you try. But apart from that, as I said just now, there are now people who are loosely attached to their party, not in general, but on particular issues, though only a very small number of people on each issue. With smaller majorities those people would have much more weight, and therefore the forces of moderation would in any case be considerably strengthened.

2418. It is your opinion that that particular class of man would not be ostracised in consequence of his independence and thrown out from the party list?—I think it would be impossible to ostracise all the people who, on any considerable issue, disagree with their party, because there would be nobody left, or comparatively few left. It is not desirable to take contemporary illustrations, but it would be very easy to go through all the Bills of the last 10 years and show that a few people had voted against their party on each of them—not the same people, of course. Those few members now have no weight, but with a small majority they would have great weight. For example, in the Education Act of 1902, which is sufficiently remote to illustrate, there were a considerable number of members who would not be ordinarily regarded as independent members who did not support the Government in every division in Committee. They had no weight then. Personally, I was glad they had not, but in a proportionately elected House they would have had great weight.

2419. Could you say what has become of them?—They are there still, a good many of them. They have not quarrelled with their party in any sense.

2420. That is to say, their measure of independence was specific rather than general?—Quite so; and that is so always.

2421. Turning from that to the practical question of the application of proportional representation, you were asked about Scotland. What are your views with regard to Ireland? Would you make the system applicable to Ireland at once?—Yes.

2422. On what system of redistribution?—As I say, I should not mix up the two questions. Of course, ultimately, there must be a redistribution, but I should take Ireland precisely as it is now—leave the three or four small boroughs as they are. The counties I should divide according to the divisions that prevailed in 1885. Belfast would of course be a constituency of four members, and Dublin another constituency of four members, and there would be in fact no serious change in the boundaries in Ireland.

2423. But you would be prepared to make the system applicable in Ireland to the counties at once?—Yes.

2424. And as I understand, applicable to the counties of Scotland and England at once?—Yes.

2425. And to the big cities in England?—Yes; I would make it applicable in form everywhere, only of course where there was only one member, it would have no meaning.

2426. Then in the case of one-member constituencies you would be content to see the temporary application of the alternative vote?—Yes.

2427. In order to get rid of the split vote?—Yes, I think so.

2428. Would you abolish the present two-member constituencies?—No, I should not. The single transferable vote would not be absolutely without a meaning, though it would have very little meaning in a two-member constituency.

2429. Yes, very little meaning; but you do not object to two-member constituencies as such?—There are very few of them.

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2430. Fifty?—Not so many, I think.
2431. (*Lord Lochee.*) Twenty-eight, I think?—Yes, twenty-eight.
2432. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) You would leave them as they are?—Yes, in the first instance. I should like to look forward to a complete scheme of redistribution, in which case I should like to get rid of the places where the transferable vote does not operate, but I think that would overburden the case in the first instance.
2433. At the moment it struck me that the single transferable vote could not be made applicable to the two-member constituencies?—You might have five or six candidates for a two-member constituency.
2434. (*Lord Lochee.*) The Proportional Representation Society wants a minimum of three members?—Yes, and it does not work well without three, and really not very well without four.
2435. (*Chairman.*) Each elector would have only one vote and not two votes, as he has now in a double member constituency?—I meant that.
2436. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The promoters of the Bills which embodied a system of alternative vote found a practical difficulty in applying it to two-member constituencies. That is what is in our minds. There have been two or three Bills, and they found there were serious practical difficulties?—Of course, as soon as you came to redistribute a great many of the two-member constituencies would become three-member.
2437. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) No doubt. But I was looking over the whole ground for the moment, and wanted your opinion as to whether it would be better, in working out a scheme, to turn the two-member constituencies into two single member constituencies, and apply the alternative vote to them pending the time when the other scheme can be made applicable?—I cannot say I have considered that particular proposal.
2438. It is really a matter of detail?—Yes.
2439. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) I understand the two main advantages, in your opinion, to be derived from adopting proportional representation would be, first, that the loosely attached candidate would have a better chance of election, and secondly, that the size of the majority inside the House would be reduced?—Yes, I should put them the other way; the size of the majority is the more important.
2440. The objections to reducing the size of the majority are that it would make government more unstable?—Yes, it is said so; but it is notable that Lord Palmerston's Government had a very small majority, but held office from 1859 to 1865.
2441. (*Lord Lochee.*) There was a small nominal majority?—Yes, a small nominal majority. He had, of course, considerable independent support.
2442. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The second objection is that it introduces the evil of what is known as the bloc system; that is to say, there would be negotiations between groups, sometimes of an unsatisfactory character. I suppose you admit that would be so?—We must not blow hot and cold. If the independent member only got in very rarely, and with difficulty, as Sir Francis Hopwood thinks, then, evidently, there would not be the evil of the bloc and the group system. If, on the other hand, the independent member got in in great numbers, there would be no doubt some of the difficulties of the group and bloc system; but there would be the additional advantage that you would have independent opinion.
2443. It is alleged that the proportional representation system would probably increase the number of independent members, the loosely attached members, and also the number of groups?—I do not myself think, though it is impossible to prove it, that there would be groups—not formal groups.
2444. Not more than under the present system?—Not more than under the present system.
2445. Then as to the chance of the independent member getting in, you think he would get in by standing on a list of his own?—Yes, standing on his own feet, as it were.
2446. It has been suggested that he would have a better chance of getting on to the party list?—Yes, that really is the same thing. Supposing it turned out that he had a good chance of getting it on his own feet, or even a fair sporting chance, the party list would be much more readily open to him. The moment it became clear that you could not absolutely destroy independence, independence would at once become tolerated by both parties. It is only the hope of absolutely eliminating it that produces the present intolerance.
2447. But are we not very much in the air about this question?—Yes, I should concede that.
2448. You have not studied the Belgian system?—No.
2449. It is a very simple system; but the effect, apparently, is to discourage, or certainly not to increase, the facilities for an independent member getting in. In fact, it rather strengthens the party system than weakens it?—In any case there would remain the great advantage that the majority in the House would not be disproportionate to the majority in the country, and therefore, there would not be these mammoth majorities, and evils which seem to me to arise out of them.
2450. But there are disadvantages the other side. It appears to me that there would be a greater opening for bargains of an unsatisfactory character with a small majority than with a large majority. That has been suggested?—Yes.
2451. (*Lord Lochee.*) I am not quite sure whether I understand that you expressed a preference for a two-member constituency over a one-member constituency?—No.
2452. You would rather not have the two-member constituencies divided?—I would rather not, but merely on the ground that I do not desire to mix up too many changes at once.
2453. Not that the one is better than the other?—No. I was merely upon the practical difficulty of getting so great a change introduced, and I should desire to make the change as small as it can be made consistently with introducing proportional representation at all.
2454. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) I think you have to a certain extent admitted that the effect of proportional representation in causing any appreciable change for good or bad would largely depend upon the size of the districts?—Yes.
2455. The larger the district, of course the more likelihood there is of having a change?—Within reasonable limits, yes.
2456. A good many of the anticipations that are based on proportional representation would scarcely be likely to be fulfilled in the case of three or four-member constituencies?—I do not pretend to have studied it sufficiently closely to make my opinion a very valuable one, but I should have thought the system worked quite well with four, just worked with three, and below three was useless.
2457. Take the case of a man of some personal calibre and independent on some tolerably prominent question; his chance of getting a group of electors to support him would obviously be greatly increased in proportion as the constituency was enlarged?—I agree.
2458. You took the case of Manchester and Mr. —. He, I assume, is regarded as a kind of classic individualist, and he would get support from individualists. Even a four-member constituency might scarcely be large enough for such a man?—No. But at any rate it is unquestionably true that the larger the constituency the better chance he would be given.
2459. That applies, therefore, to a good deal of the change that is looked for from proportional representation?—To that part of the change, yes.
2460. If the thing is to work change for good or ill—but preferably for good—the constituencies must be large?—Yes.
2461. With regard to the fact that you do not anticipate harm from small Government majorities in the House of Commons, you expect a high standard of

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integrity from the House of Commons?—Personal integrity, yes.

2462. I mean political integrity?—Yes, not a higher standard than there is now—much the same.

2463. For instance, supposing a Government had a majority of 30, and that in forming an administration the Premier mortally offended seven or eight supporters—such things have been suggested as possible—it would, of course, give those men great opportunities for quietly paying out grudges?—Yes, but I do not think personal motives operate, or can operate so persistently as to make them very formidable. That is to say, the seven or eight men would be under the pressure of public opinion; they could not do a thing evidently spiteful, or they could not often do it.

2464. In the course of three or four years a man has opportunities in politics?—Yes, but of course I contemplate that the Government should change the convention that a small defeat is a serious matter. I should look to the establishment of a convention that a Government was not turned out, except when it was really reasonably clear they had lost confidence.

2465. In fact, it would be driving this great Parliament to adopt some of the principles or conventions that have been adopted in Colonial Parliaments where they have had to face the difficulty of a small majority?—Yes, or the conventions which prevailed up to 1874, certainly.

2466. Of course, I am slightly prejudiced by experience in a Colonial Parliament, and there I have seen the most deplorable results from a few independents being able to hold the scale. I am bound to say that?—I cannot say.

2467. (Chairman.) Are there any other electoral methods which you think ought to be adopted in this country, quite apart from proportional representation; for instance, elections all on one day?—Yes, I think I am in favour of elections all on one day.

2468. You have already referred to meeting part of the expenses out of public funds?—Yes.

2469. The question of redistribution hardly comes before us; but there is one question on that I should

like to ask. Do you consider population should be the basis of electoral areas or the number of electors?—I should say electors. I have always thought the population doctrine is an artificial one.

2470. Would you welcome an automatic redistribution, so that the number of members in Parliament should equally divide the number of electors?—No; not with absolutely arithmetical precision. That would not be possible.

2471. But as far as possible you would like it, I suppose?—I should like it to be very much nearer than it is now. I think that nothing is so difficult or so foolish as to ignore local predilections. You must not attempt to force a system arithmetically complete on constituencies, because they would find it intolerable.

2472. (Sir Francis Hopwood) Would you take 25 per cent. above or 25 per cent. below the quota?—I should define some basis of that kind, and I should modify it under pressure.

2473. (Chairman.) You would be willing, under the circumstances, to retain the university representation?—Yes.

2474. How would proportional representation affect it?—Perhaps not in the first instance, because it would break through my rule of making no change which is not absolutely necessary; but I should be ready to clump the universities.

2475. And have English universities in one group and Scotch in another?—Yes, on lines of that kind.

2476. Do you consider this scheme would really have the effect of giving representation to minorities, in places like Wales, to the Conservatives?—Yes, I should have thought it would.

2477. And to the Liberals in Birmingham?—It is, of course, impossible to answer any particular case without having looked into the figures, but I should think so, certainly.

2478. The tendency would be to do so?—Yes.

2479. Therefore the general interest of the minorities in those districts would be increased?—Yes, and the absurdity of Wales not returning a single Conservative would evidently be got rid of.

The witness withdrew.

Doctor HACKETT called and examined.

2480. (Chairman.) You live in Western Australia?—Yes.

2481. You are connected with the principal newspaper in Perth?—Yes.

2482. In that capacity you have no doubt taken particular interest in the various changes which have been taking place in Western Australia in electoral methods?—Yes; a great interest both in the mechanism and in the general subject.

2483. We should be very grateful if you could give us your experience. You are really the first practical witness we have had who has actually seen an election which has taken place under any system of preferential voting. So far our elections have been theoretical, and test ones?—Was Tasmania not referred to?

2484. Yes?—Because they worked it out still more fully than we did.

2485. We have not had a witness from Tasmania yet?—They have let it drop, though; but we have that system still in existence. It was adopted two years ago and we have had one Parliament under it.

2486. The election was in March 1908?—Yes.

2487. You still retain the single-member constituencies?—Yes. It was tried under very restricted conditions. In the first place we retained the single members—single-seat electorates, and in the second place we did not make it compulsory. Curiously enough one case that would have been specially useful as a test case did not succeed because they abstained from giving a second vote—that is, they plumped for their own man.

2488. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) First of all, what was the position in this constituency?—I may explain that there was one Labour man standing and three who claimed to be supporters of the Government. It was

a Government seat, but each of the parties supporting the three Government candidates expected that the Premier and members of the Government should appear on their platform. They unfortunately were unwise enough to select one, whereupon the other parties declined to cast a second vote, or to use the "contingent vote," as we call it in the Act, and the minority man—the Labour man—got in.

2489. Was it a personal contest, or were there separate interests represented by the Government supporters?—There is a good deal of personal element in a small election like that; but they decided if the Government would not help them to get their man in they would not help to get the man in for the Government, so they abstained from voting, excepting the primary vote.

2490. (Chairman.) The actual result was that the man who was only really representing the minority was returned?—Yes, and that was a thing we wished to avoid.

2491. Would you say that was an isolated instance, or is it likely to occur in many cases?—I am afraid so. We pointed out at the time that the fact that the contingent vote was not made compulsory would be likely to result in this failure of the intention of the Act.

2492. The movement there is in favour of making it compulsory?—I should think so now.

2493. But how would you effect that—by making the paper, which contained no alternative vote on it, invalid?—Yes.

2494. You would attach no penalty?—No penalty—I think not. The man should lose his vote. That is sufficient.

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[Continued.]

2495. Is the experience you have had so far in favour of or against the adoption of the single transferable vote?—It is entirely in favour of it, except where it breaks down owing to causes not its own fault. The returning officer, for example, finds no difficulty whatever in easily and rapidly handling the ballot papers. Then the elector learns his work at once. We gather that from the fact that the proportion of spoiled votes was not in excess of occasions when this system was not in use.

2496. In single-member constituencies the number of candidates was not very large for any particular one?—It ran up to five or six—in one case even seven.

2497. For one seat?—For one seat, but it was a curious fact that in these largely contested electorates the man who headed the poll on the first count without exception—excepting the one I have mentioned, North Perth—retained it to the end, even though it was very narrow in some cases.

2498. Did most of the elections take place on strict party lines?—Yes, absolutely on party lines. It has been thought that a first condition for successful government was to break up the different parties and reduce them to two, and two only. Now, every contest is fought out strictly. A Labour candidate on the one side, and a Government or a non-Labour man on the other. Labour is now the dominating feature in nearly all Australian elections.

2499. (Lord Lochee.) Labour and non-Labour?—Labour and non-Labour.

2500. (Chairman.) In practice it is really reverting to a dual party system?—In our State we have been fortunate in being able to secure that, but not in the Federal Government.

2501. Do you consider the extension of this proportional scheme would tend to preserve that or lessen it?—My idea of proportional voting is, that to have any really useful effect, you must have several seats in each constituency.

2502. Large constituencies?—A constituency of many seats; the more the better, theoretically. But at the same time this must be taken into consideration: the fewer the number of your seats, the better for the party system; the larger the number of seats, the more certainly you will tend towards the group system. The question is whether we should go for one or other of those systems boldly, or try and effect the *via media*.

2503. Is opinion very much divided in Western Australia as to whether the fuller system should be adopted or not?—No; the people require a good deal of educating about that yet.

2504. It is hardly a question of practical politics at the present moment?—I think not. What really brought about the change was the fact that so many minority men got in.

2505. You are referring to the change brought about by the Act of 1907?—Yes. Without the preferential vote some Parliaments back, there were certainly seven members, and I think eight, who represented minorities. That is a working majority, so that really the Government carried on, or could have carried on, with a minority in the country avowedly.

2506. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) How many constituencies are there in Western Australia?—Fifty in the Lower Chamber, and 30 in the elected Upper House.

2507. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) Your geographical area is about one-third the size of Europe?—More than half. It is two-thirds, if you leave Russia out.

2508. That is about one-third the size of the continent of Europe?—Yes.

2509. You divide that between 50 constituencies?—Yes. A great deal of it is chiefly occupied by bullocks and sheep, that is pastoral.

2510. Still, the areas are enormous?—Yes.

2511. That has something to do with the difficulty of having very large group constituencies, which would make the area still more enormous?—Yes, it would; but the population is pretty well gathered in certain localities.

2512. What is your population, 280,000?—About 280,000.

2513. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) My reason for asking the number of constituencies is, that I gather from you a material proportion of the 50 returned for the Assembly represented minorities?—Yes; quite 7 out of 50. That is as large a majority as a Colonial Premier seeks to be endowed with. A too large majority is as much a danger as a too small one.

2514. (Chairman.) Did you hear Lord Hugh Cecil just now refer to the fact that it is undesirable that the Government should pay attention to small defeats?—In the House or in the country?

2515. In the House?—Yes, I think I came in just as he was speaking about it.

2516. In practice your Government does not necessarily feel itself called upon to resign on a minor defeat of that sort in the House?—It depends on the strength of the forces against them. They will hold on as long as they can. That is my experience.

2517. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) For instance, on a snap division, on a motion for adjournment, they would not resign if they had a majority in the ordinary way?—No; unless it was understood that that would be taken as a test question. The two reasons that actuated those in favour of the preferential vote were the one I have spoken of—to destroy the minority power—and to allow all sections of the community to be represented. Of course I hold the feeling very strongly that we are tending to the extinction of the party system, and that it will carry with it, perhaps, the destruction of responsible Government in the shape we have it. If groups are found essential either in the Local Parliaments or the Federal Parliament, I mean if they be returned in spite of our efforts to the contrary, I do not quite see how responsible government will work.

2518. (Chairman.) The system in the Federal election is ordinary voting, as in this country?—Yes, it is similar, and it has acted very unsatisfactorily in some respects. In our own State it is fought out on the two definite lines—Labour and non-Labour. The non-Labour votes amounted to about two-fifths—that is both at the last Senate election and the election before. Labour had the other three-fifths. They secured the elections by their admirable organisation, and, I must add, the loyalty of the men to their leaders; but it leaves us, who are not Labour men, in a hopeless position. We stand as returning six Labour men to the Senate, which is a dominating force, whereas they are only entitled at most to four, which would leave them a net influence of two.

2519. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) As it is, do they return all the Labour men, or five?—They return all six, and we feel it very acutely.

2520. In some of the other States they do not get their fair proportion?—Yes, it is the other way in New South Wales.

2521. That is the other example?—Yes. Sir John Forrest was very indignant at it. It seems a reversal of his wishes and his policy, and he has introduced a Bill or resolution in favour of breaking up the State into three. I think that would not meet the point at all. It has got objections of its own, and you would have repeated in each of the three what now takes place in the whole. The only remedy is this preferential vote.

2522. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) Should you say the main reason for the change in 1907 was the desire to give more effective representation to the majority, or better representation to the minority, because you have mentioned both reasons?—I would not put it as the minority, but the minorities—the groups. I think both reasons operated; but it was to relieve the country from minorities of which we had a gross example in a previous Parliament. Four or five men who had no title to speak dominated the country and the House, and not in a way that, I think, commanded the approval of, I was going to say, honest politicians—which is rather a strong phrase; but at all events there was an amount of intriguing going on continually with this little body, and some of them represented minorities, or at least did not represent the majority in the constituencies.

2523. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) The Government had but a small majority in the House, six or seven?—

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[Continued.]

Taking this little party out they were about equal to the other side.

2524. So that this small group of quasi independent men were able to hold the balance of power, more or less, and in a deleterious way?—They threw everything into confusion. The country recognised it, and they swept them all out of their seats at the next election with one exception, who recanted, but I am afraid he has since then gone back to his mistaken courses.

2525. They frequently recant at election time in the Colonies?—Yes, it was so in this case.

2526. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) With you it is what is called the "contingent vote"?—We call it the contingent vote.

2527. In Queensland it is the same?—It is not quite that. I am not quite sure what it was, but it amounted to holding another election, which, of course, is out of the question altogether.

2528. That is a system which is applicable to single-member constituencies?—Yes.

2529. It is more like what we call the alternative vote?—Yes.

2530. That is to say, you vote for A. or you vote for B. if you like?—Yes.

2531. That is not really the same thing as the single transferable vote and proportional representation?—No, it is not quite the same.

2532. So that as a matter of fact you have not yet had any experience of proportional representation as such?—That is what I pointed out. It was in a most restricted manner that we tried the principle.

2533. But I gather if you make another move along the line it will be in the direction of proportional representation?—Yes, making it compulsory, and probably grouping electorates together. Until we get to that stage I do not see that we have got very far.

2534. Your experience of the system you have at present is not sufficiently favourable to make you desire to retain it?—No, but to change it, if possible.

2535. But your new experiment would be in the direction of proportional representation?—Yes.

2536. And not a reversion to the old state of things?—No.

2537. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Is there any strong body of opinion in Western Australia in favour of grouping constituencies, do you think, and making larger multi-member constituencies?—The feeling in most of these new places is created by what is called the Press. I do not like to speak of it, but I think that must be accepted. If it is in the right hands people will generally follow it; if not, they resent it.

2538. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) What is the system of election for the Commonwealth Parliament?—Precisely the same as you have here.

2539. Following *Sir Courtenay Ilbert's* line of thought, is there any pressure for an alteration of the system as regards the Commonwealth election—that is, any pressure for proportional representation?—There is a certain amount. It does not command a majority.

2540. It has not become practical politics?—No. As I say, *Sir John Forrest's* remedy is to go still further in the wrong direction, if I may put it so.

2541. I suppose the grave criticism on the application of the system there would be the enormous areas to which you would have to make it applicable?—The difficulty about that is that the most mature organisation, and the most vigorous, such as the Labour party, for it is the strongest, have altogether an undue weight. In fact, it becomes a fight between the Labour people and the Press. The only organisation that can at all equal the Labour people in our State is the Press.

2542. Would it be fair to say that the chances of proportional representation in the Commonwealth Parliament are small, because the Labour party, being dominant, has everything to gain by retaining the present position, and everything to lose by a new one?—It has not everything to lose or gain, because New South Wales comes in as a counterpoise to our case. They have done the opposite there; they have returned all anti-Labour men, and that prevents them being very eager about a change.

2543. It would cut both ways?—Yes, but I think it is quite possible at the next election they will lose some seats to Labour, whose organisation is so complete.

2544. You have had no experience of the second ballot?—No. I think the second ballot is all wrong. It means more expense, it entirely sets aside our principle of all elections on one day, and it means that a different election is fought altogether, and different influences are brought to bear, and canvassing goes on. It is two different events in the electoral campaign.

2545. I suppose the party in power with you really has control of the party machine?—What do you mean by the party machine? In the American sense.

2546. Would it be true to say that the Government of the day in Western Australia has the best chances of making arrangements for a general election?—Oh, yes.

2547. Not as to date, but as to method and conduct?—Yes. I am not in their secrets on that point but I think most of us can discern that it gives the Government an advantage and they use it. You were speaking about the advantage of the group or the party system. I think I should say that the party system is distinctly the best if you can be sure of your leader, that he is a man of capacity, character, and patriotism. I cannot say the calibre of our Australian public man is rising. Perhaps it may in time, but that has not been our experience in the past. It may be due to the dropping out of the old veterans, but at all events we deplore that it is not the same high level, and if you fail in getting a leader of that kind I think it is better to get as full a representation of the country as possible, and that at once brings us to the group system.

2548. (*Chairman.*) It would inevitably be groups to be a reflex of the opinion of the country?—To get full representation it must be groups. I think that is fairly obvious.

2549. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Has the Tasmanian system been studied much in Australia, and excited much interest?—They have all excited very much interest, but there is an idea abroad that it is too complicated. When all the complications are put into a schedule the elector never sees them; he is simply told what he has to do. Some in Tasmania raised a cry that it did not turn out as they expected, and that the man who had arranged it, arranged it so that he was able to get in—one of the Ministers, I think, of the day—whereas his chance should not have been equivalent to success. The Hare-Spence system is the one they used, and that seems to me to fulfil all conditions. There is a mathematical possibility of the non-fulfilment of your object in every one of these systems; I am quite certain of that, but it is a very small possibility in most cases, and when a man of the minority is returned it is only by a vote or two, and you may say that is practically near enough to representation. It certainly does not warrant the whole system being set aside.

2550. Do you think the Tasmanian system makes for or against the two party system?—As I pointed out before, I think it depends upon the size of the constituency. If you have many seats it makes for the group, but the fewer seats you have the more you approximate to the two party arrangement.

2551. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) I gather from you that the two disadvantages of the Contingent Vote Act in Western Australia are first of all that the use of the contingent vote is not compulsory?—Yes.

2552. And in the second place you have only single-member constituencies?—That is so.

2553. Are you aware that there has been a general election in Tasmania during the last three months?—Yes, but I am sorry to say the hospitality of this country has prevented us from paying almost any attention to Australian politics.

2554. There has been an election in Tasmania?—I know there has been.

2555. And the result is rather curious, namely, that the Labour party, who, as you know, in Tasmania

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[Continued.]

were hardly represented in Parliament before, have captured two-fifths of the seats?—I did not know the proportion.

2556. It is 12 out of 30, I think; and the result is the other parties have federated?—Yes.

2557. So the curious state of things in Tasmania is that it has brought about at present the two-party system, Labour and anti-Labour?—It is due to our alarm at Labour politics. Let it be understood that it is not Socialistic feeling that we dread in the least. I do not think that is very strongly in evidence amongst the Labour people. The main objection we make to it is the caucus. It is a danger to the community. What happens is: They put the ablest man they can get at their head; they hold a caucus; they instruct him what he is to say and what he is to think. They boast of that. The result is—and this is the most serious outcome of it all—that each able man as he is placed at the top in turn gets disgusted and drops away.

2558. As Mr. Watson did?—Yes, and as Mr. Fisher will do, and they will have to get weaker and weaker men and rely altogether upon their general caucus

speaking through the parliamentary caucus. That is our dread.

2559. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The members have become delegates?—It is not a system that makes for the good of the community as a whole.

2560. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) I understand from you that the tendency in Australia for some time past has been really to evolve a two-party system, Labour and anti-Labour, Labour being very closely organised, but that the nominal Labour parliamentarian and the party committees are really controlled and worked by an outside caucus?—That is so.

2561. And the popular objection—or at any rate the middle-class objection—is to this outside caucus largely?—Yes, we object to the caucus. We think it bad for the country. That is really my objection. With the Labour party otherwise, I am happy to say, we work on the most amicable terms.

2562. The men are not personally corrupt?—Most emphatically no. I do not think any statesman in Australia is. It is remarkably pure.

2563. There is hardly any personal corruption?—That is so.

The witness withdrew.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

Wednesday, 7th July 1909.

PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
LL.D., D.C.L.
The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Mr. JOHN WILLIAM GORDON called and examined.

2564. (*Chairman.*) You are a barrister?—Yes.

2565. Formerly you were an actuary?—Yes.

2566. You have given considerable attention to the scheme of proportional representation as suggested by the Society of which Lord Courtney is chairman?—I have.

2567. I understand you have several criticisms to make upon that scheme?—Yes.

2568. In your previous memorandum of evidence you referred to the test election undertaken by that Society?—Yes.

2569. We shall be obliged if you will briefly go through your main criticisms of that election?—May I say that with a view of making clear the substance of my points I have prepared a printed document which I think you have, called "Hypothetical Polls." If I might indicate in that way the drift of my criticisms I think they will be more intelligible when I deal with the document itself. For the purpose of preparing these hypothetical polls I have assumed that there are three systems of voting to be exemplified. The first I call the Strict Party Voting System, and under that system I assume that all the party voters vote for the party candidates, and vote according to a pre-arranged order of preference; and also that they do not give any vote beyond their party; so that there is no cross voting so far as that party is concerned.

2570. They simply vote according to the party organisation ticket?—Yes, the party ticket. Then the second, the Free Party Voting System, is a system under which the party voters vote for their own party candidates and for no others, but in no pre-arranged

order. The third, which I call the Free Voting System, is the system substantially under which the test election is carried out; that is to say, although you have the voters divided into parties, they vote as they please, and give as many preferences as they please; there is no limitation to the party candidates, and they give their vote in any order in which they please. But in order to make it possible to follow out that system, I have imposed upon myself two additional conditions; that is to say, I have assumed that every voter gives his vote, first of all, within his party, so that the cross voting only comes with the later preferences when all the party preferences have been exhausted; and I have assumed also that the residual voting power is reduced by 10 per cent. on every count—that, of course, gradually extinguishes the residual preferences. I think that is very much what is the experience of the Proportional Representation Society. Under those conditions I have assumed that a total poll of 60,000 votes is cast; I have assumed that there are three parties taking part in the election; and I have assumed that there are four seats to be filled, and, as in the test election, that there are 12 candidates. My first case is to show that it is possible under these conditions for this curious anomaly to occur, that a candidate with fewer votes may be elected over the head of another candidate with more votes.

2571. By fewer votes you mean first votes given?—Fewer votes standing when the poll is declared—the candidate with fewer votes to his credit,—the reason being that they are distributed. Some of his are undeveloped second preference votes.

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Mr. J. W. GORDON.

[Continued.]

CASE I.

	1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	4th Count.	5th Count.	6th and Final Count.
Strict Party Voting.	A	21,000	12,001	12,001	12,001	12,001
	B		8,999	8,999	8,999	8,999
	C					
	D					
Strict Party Voting.	K	19,000	12,001	12,001	12,001	12,001
	L		6,999	6,999	6,999	
	M				6,000	
	N					
Free Party Voting.	W	13,000	12,001	12,001	1,2001	12,001
	X	3,000	3,500	4,000	6,998 (6,000)	
	Y	3,000	3,400	3,800 (2,998)		
	Z	1,000	1,000 (900)			

2572. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) Is this Case 1?—Yes. If you will allow me to go through that case, you will see exactly how it happens. The first party, which I call the "A." party, consisting of candidates A., B., C. and D., is a strict party-voting party, and I assume that it disposes of 21,000 votes. The second, which I call the K. party, is also a strict party-voting party—and disposes of 19,000. The W. party, the Free Party-voting party—not free voting, but still party—disposes of 20,000 votes, making up the 60,000. Upon the first count, in the A. party all the votes are cast for the first candidate, A. The quota in that case, as there are four candidates, will be five into 60,000—12,001 votes. On the first count each party is able to get in a candidate; A. is elected; K. and W. are elected, although in the case of W. it is to a certain extent arbitrary, because I have had to assume an order of preference in which the first votes are cast. W. gets 13,000, X. 3,000, Y. 3,000, and Z. 1,000. That is a possible disposition of party popularity. The result is you have three elected on the first count, and the whole contest is for the fourth seat. No one of the parties is able to carry the fourth seat by a quota of its own voting strength. "A." shows the best that can be done. The candidate B. receives first and second preference votes to the number of 8,999. L., the second candidate of the K. party, receives 2,000 fewer second preference votes. In the W. party the second preference votes are distributed approximately in the order of preference shown by the first count—that is to say, there are 1,000 votes over, and taking 10 per cent. off those leaves 900 distributable, 500 going to X. and 400 to Y. So that the second count is as shown in that column, and nobody is yet elected.

2573. Why do you take 10 per cent. off?—Because I have assumed that residual voting power is exhausted to the extent of 10 per cent. at every count. Then after the second count the next operation is to distribute Z.'s votes,—he being at the bottom of the poll,—to the number of 900. As there are party candidates amongst whom they can be distributed, those 900 are distributed as before between X. and Y. On the next count it becomes Y.'s turn to be counted out. Here I have had to suppress rather more than 10 per cent. of his votes because I wanted to bring about a particular result, and if I had taken 3,500 votes from Y., and given them to the only remaining party candidate, X., he would have come above L., and in that case L. would have had to be distributed next time. I want X. to be distributed next time, so I have given him fewer than

3,500, only 2,998 votes, and dropped 20 per cent. instead of 10 per cent. on this occasion. The result of that is shown at the fourth count, when you have X. to be counted out; and, as there are no more party candidates to whom his votes can go over, I have assumed that the candidate M. of the K. party is *persona grata* to the W. party, and that the available residue of X.'s votes go over, upon what would be a fifth preference, to M. The result of that is that M. is now in this position: he has 6,000 votes counted to him, and he has 6,999 votes that are not yet counted to him, but will be third preference votes which are at present counted as second preference votes to L. The result of this election depends on which of those two candidates, L. or M., is counted out.

2574. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) You assume that all the people who voted for L., as second preferences, have gone for M. as their third choice?—Yes, I assume that. That is strict party voting as given in my assumptions. As matters stand, M. must be counted out. Therefore he is counted out first, and as his votes are all fifth preference votes from another party, there is no reason to assume that L. would benefit to any material extent by those. It is a personal preference only; so it is reasonable to assume that they do not enure for the benefit of L. to any substantial extent. Therefore L. must be counted out next, and the seat falls to B., not because B. has received the quota, or the maximum number of votes cast, but because by the operation of the machinery which the society has provided, he is the last to be left in the running. It is anomalous enough as it stands there; but this curious result appears now. If you assume that the K. party had originally disposed of fewer votes; that is to say, if they had disposed of only 18,000 votes,—and let me aggravate the case, and assume that those 1,000 votes were given to the A. party, so that the K. party is worse off to the extent of having 1,000 votes transferred from itself to a hostile party,—it would have got its man in, because in that case L. would have to be counted out. He would have had 5,999 votes—1,000 fewer—but 5,999 added to 6,000 of M., would have carried M. in over the head of B.; so that you have this anomalous result, that if the K. party had been weaker by 1,000 at the poll it would have got two candidates in, whereas by reason of its strength it is only able to carry one. I shall show you that something very like that did actually occur in the test election, and for this purpose I am going to ask you to let me modify these figures. You will recall that I have used what I call disgram-

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[Continued.]

matic figures, very round figures to make it quite easy to see the operations, so that the mere mechanism shall not obscure the operations, but it could all have been done with much smaller figures. The assumption that 6,000 votes go over from one party to another is rather a large assumption. Six thousand out of 8,000

is a very large proportion of votes to be carried over. If I may make the machinery a little more complicated, but not substantially more complicated, I may do it with a proportion of votes such as actually passed over at the test election to show that this is not at all a forced or impossible case. May I hand in a copy of the altered figures ?

CASE 1A.

—		1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	4th Count.	5th Count.	6th and Final Count.
Strict Party Voting -	A	21,000	12,001	12,001	12,001	12,001	12,001
	B		8,999	8,999	8,999	8,999	8,999
	C						
	D						
Strict Party Voting -	K	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
	L	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	
	M					1,320	
	N						
Free Party Voting -	W	13,000	12,001	12,001	12,001	12,001	12,001
	X	4,000	4,500	5,000	7,998		
	Y	3,000	3,400	3,800	(1,320)		
	Z	1,000	1,000	(2,998)			
			(900)				

For this purpose I am not going to observe the rule of strict party voting with the K. party; but I propose now to distribute the K. votes in this order—10,000 to K. and 8,000 to L. to start with. The rest of the operation is carried out exactly as before, but with this alteration, that when you come to the fourth count I assume that of X's distributable votes, 1,320—that is to say, 16½ per cent., go over on the fifth count to the K. party. The reason why I take 16½ per cent. is because 16½ per cent. was the proportion of Mr. Long's votes that went over in the test election to Mr. Burt. That 16½ per cent. means 1,320 votes, and I assume that 1,320 votes go to M. The state of the poll on the fifth count is that there are two candidates elected only—one of the A. party and one of the W. party. K. stands third on the list, B. stands fourth, and L. and M. fifth and sixth respectively. The same thing happens as in Case 1. M. is cut out, then L.,

while B. and K. are elected, not by the quota but by majorities, and you get the same result as in the actual election. At the same time M. has in this case also been ousted, though there are more votes cast for him than for B. If you could have distributed L's votes in this case the result of the election would have been, A., K., M. and W. So this is not a forced case although the figures are so contrived as to make the mere following of the operations very simple; but it substantially is a case that actually occurred in the Society's own test election. My Case 2, is a case devised for the purpose of illustrating the superiority of party voting over free voting. That is suggested by some evidence which has been given before you which tends in the direction that there will be no strong disposition to use party machinery in connection with these elections.

CASE 2.

—		1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	• —	1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	
Strict Party Voting.	A	25,000	12,001	12,001	ALTERNATIVE.				
	B		12,001	12,001					
	C		998			K	10,000	10,000	10,000
	D		(000)						
Free Voting -	K	10,000	10,000	12,001	Free Party Voting.	W	10,000	12,001	12,001
	W	10,000	11,600	12,001		X	6,000	7,000	12,001
	X	6,000	7,000	9,998		Y	5,000	5,600	
	Y	5,000	6,000			Z	4,000	(5,001)	
	Z	4,000	(5,400)				(3,601)		
		(3,600)							

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[Continued.]

I put this case forward as suggesting that the temptation to use party machinery will be perfectly irresistible, because the efficiency of party machinery would be so high. Here the case is altered to this extent, that you have two strong parties and one weak party. The K. party is supposed to be a minority party here, which is not able to carry a candidate by its own strength at all, and therefore its chance is to get in by cross voting. I have gone very carefully through the first case, and I do not think I need trouble the Commission with the mechanism of this, because it is substantially the same as before. You get Z.'s votes distributed—90 per cent. of them—and Y.'s votes distributed—90 per cent. of them—in the regular course; but when Y.'s votes come to be distributed I have assumed there is a little cross voting, so that K. gets the benefit of the cross voting there which carries him in—a thing which might quite well happen under a free voting system, and which did in fact happen in the test election. Now the alternative case is printed on the right-hand side. The A. party really stands upon its own footing all through in this case, and therefore there is nothing to be said

about that, but the W. party now, instead of Free Voting, takes to Free Party Voting, that is to say, there is to be no cross voting until the party candidates have been exhausted. The result of that is that the W. party gets in two candidates, as the A. party does, and the K. party is left out in the cold. If that is possible as the mere result of machinery, I suggest the temptation to use machinery will be perfectly irresistible. It is exactly like what has happened. The first case, the free-voting case, is substantially what happened at the Dundee and Merthyr Tydfil elections at the last General Election, and the other case is substantially what happened at Portsmouth, Southampton, and Brighton. In the case of the Dundee and Merthyr Tydfil elections there were minority candidates who slipped in with the aid of cross voting, and in the Portsmouth and Southampton elections there was no cross voting at all, and the minority candidate, who stood just as well as the minority candidate in Dundee, was kept out. The same thing would happen, as I think this case shows, under the Proportional Representation Society's system. Now, the actual test election is set out in Case 3.

CASE 3.

	1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	4th Count.	5th Count.	6th Count.	7th Count.	8th Count.	9th Count.
A	9,042 (5,425)	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617
B	2,751	7,455	7,455 (3,836)	3,619	3,619	3,619	3,619	3,619	3,619
C	260	542	554	1,793	1,814	1,903	2,025	2,683	3,053
D	191	297	299	1,396	1,408	1,465	1,500 (1,354)		
K	460	539	734	822	908	926 (744)			
L	1,038	1,195	1,198	2,032	2,046	2,279	2,328	2,829	
M	2,124	2,154	2,159	2,387	2,408	2,600	2,708	2,851	2,938
N	398	419	421	683	702 (657)				
W	4,478	4,478 (862)	3,616	3,616	3,616	3,616	3,616	3,616	3,616
X	672	699	1,225	1,282	1,505	1,513	2,003	2,035 (538)	
Y	94	104	156	167 (156)					
Z	164	173	238	258 (240)					

I have written on the paper which I handed in just now the names of the candidates. I will simply represent them by letters here. Perhaps I may say that in this test election "A." is Mr. Asquith, "B." is Mr. Lloyd-George, "C." is Mr. Burt, "D." is Mr. Leif Jones; "K.," who ought to have been shown as standing apart as an independent candidate, is Lord Hugh Cecil; "L.," "M.," and "N." are the three Labour candidates—Messrs. Henderson, Macdonald, and Shackleton; "W.," Mr. Balfour; "X.," Mr. Long; "Y.," Mr. Joynson-Hicks; and "Z.," Mr. F. E. Smith. You have the result of that first count set out in the first column, and, as the result of the first count, there was a distributable surplus from Mr. Asquith of 5,425 votes. For compression I have indicated where votes are distributed, and shown them within a bracket. Under the candidates' votes you see 5,425 standing under Mr. Asquith's 9,042, but those are not in every case the total votes, but only the total votes actually transferred. In the case of votes which lapse—exhausted votes—they do not appear in the brackets. I want first to draw attention to the fact that the 5,425 votes transferred from Mr. Asquith's surplus is the whole surplus—that is to say, exhausted votes do not diminish the surplus at all. The 3,617 which are carried to his credit for the purposes of the election, and the 5,425,

make up his total poll of 9,042. There were, I believe, some 33 votes that were exhausted, which showed no further preference at all, but those votes were counted to him for the benefit of his quota and as part of his quota, and therefore they do not diminish the amount of his distributable surplus at all. But when you come to the candidates lower down, whose votes have to be cut up and distributed, you will notice that there is always a taxing off for exhausted preference. The first, for instance is "Y." who is cut up on the fourth count, and he only cuts up into 156 votes out of his 167, and "Z." cuts up into 240 out of 258. When you come to some of the other cases you get a very much larger reduction in the value of the surplus. For instance, "X.," on the eighth count, is only available to the extent of 538 out of 2,035. There there is a very distinct advantage to a majority party. You can always, when you are distributing a surplus, save the exhausted votes because you can throw them into the quota, but where you cannot throw them into the quota they count against the distributable surplus. I want to point out that in that case there is an advantage, not in this instance a numerically heavy or serious advantage, but still an advantage, in favour of majorities, which in the case of a very closely contested election might very well be decisive.

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[Continued.]

2575. (*Chairman.*) The value of a preference to a popular candidate is much greater than to an unpopular candidate?—It may be much greater. Yet that is qualified in a curious way. If the candidate is popular enough to hang on till near the end of his election his popularity militates against his efficiency. Take Mr. Walter Long, the last to be cut out. The reason why his votes cut up to so few was that he had held on so long. So that one cannot generalise to the extent of saying that the preferences given to a popular candidate are necessarily more valuable than the preferences given to an unpopular candidate. The fact is that the working of the system is so intricate that it is a mere matter of chance whether it is one way or the other, and one of the objections, in fact, a very large part of the objection, which I urge is that there is such a very large element of chance in the operation of the scheme. I think the next point to which I need draw attention is the case I spoke of, of Mr. Long. The rest is illustrative of what I have already said. I will pass now to the case of the eighth count, and the division of X's votes—that is, Mr. Walter Long's. Of those votes, 538 are available for distribution, and of the 538, 370, I think it is, passed over to Mr. Burt, who is "C." That is a transfer of 16½ per cent., and that is the reason why, as I said in my Case 1a, I took 16½ per cent. or 1,320 votes as passing from Y. to M. The result of that transfer is very curious. If you will follow Mr. Burt's fortunes through, you will notice that on the distribution of the Lloyd-George surplus B.'s surplus—3,836 votes—he receives about 1,240. That makes a great deal of difference to him, because he is in very close competition at that stage with Mr. Walter Long; in fact, Mr. Walter Long is ahead of him on the third count, but on the fourth count those 1,200 votes put him clear ahead of Mr. Walter Long, and Mr. Walter Long never recovered that blow through the whole of the election—he was behind all the time. Those votes that went over to Mr. Burt were not the whole of what were distributed from Mr. Lloyd George's surplus, and as a matter of fact the labour candidates, Messrs. Henderson, Macdonald, and Shackleton, received as many—I think rather more between them—of Mr. Lloyd-George's surplus votes. So that upon the whole the

distribution of the surplus votes—the third preference votes that went over from Mr. Lloyd-George—were calculated to benefit the Labour candidates even more than they benefited Mr. Burt. As the result of that count, when with one exception the Liberal vote is exhausted, both Mr. Henderson and Mr. Macdonald stand above Mr. Burt, and if the poll had been declared of that time Mr. Henderson and Mr. Macdonald would both have been elected. The result of that, however, of that putting Mr. Burt above Mr. Long, when it comes to a competition, as it does on the eighth count, between Mr. Burt and Mr. Long, is that Mr. Long has to go out. The curious thing is that although as the result of the Liberal vote Mr. Burt is behind the two Labour candidates and is thrown out, the votes which are transferred from Mr. Long put him ahead of them and actually carry him through; so that it is clearly an accidental result. It is a result which could not occur under an organised system, because it would be so manifestly to the advantage of the Conservative Party to divide the Liberal forces instead of giving them a compact majority that one may be quite sure that those 370 votes would not have been allowed to be transferred under an organised system of election to a strong and really formidable member of the rival party. So it may be said, as I suggest with perfect confidence, that the election of Mr. Burt was a mere accident; he was not carried in by the votes of his party; he was left, as a matter of fact, out of the running by the votes of his party, and it was by the inadvertent and ill-advised accretion of opposition votes that he was carried in. The result of that election from the party point of view is a very unsatisfactory one, because, although the Liberal Party secured the election of three candidates, one of their candidates owes a divided allegiance and is in the unpleasant position of depending upon the cross voting of a hostile party. Now, if I may ask your attention to Case 4, which is the same test election, and the same figures only re-cast to the extent necessary to substitute a free party-voting system for the entirely free-voting system of the test election, I think I can show you that the result would have been, from a party point of view, very different and very much more satisfactory.

CASE 4.

	1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	4th Count.	5th Count.	6th Count.	7th Count.	8th Count.	9th Count.
Free Party Voting	A	9,042 (5,425)	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617	3,617
	B	2,751	7,755	7,755 (3,836)	2,619	3,619	3,619	3,619	3,619
	C	260	566	566	3,085	3,085	3,129	3,190	3,190
	D	191	306	306	1,623	1,623	1,652	1,670	1,670 (1,334)
Free Voting	K	460	460	460	460	460	469 (372)	1,169 (1,050)	3,324
	L	1,038	1,038	1,038	1,038	1,038	1,144	2,274	3,324
	M	2,124	2,124	2,124	2,124	2,124	2,250	2,274	3,324
	N	398	398	398	398	398 (318)	398	398	398
Free Party Voting	W	4,478	4,478 (862)	3,616	3,616	3,616	3,616	3,616	3,616
	X	672	672	1,374	1,374	1,770	1,774	2,019	2,019
	Y	94	94	168	168 (156)	168	168	168	168
	Z	164	164	250	250 (240)	250	250	250	250

I may draw attention to the fact that the same candidates, in fact, are elected whichever system is adopted. The result of the election, so far as personnel is concerned, is the same, and it is a

very curious thing that apparently, however you manipulate these names, you are bound to get either this or almost this election. One of the points which I submit in my Memorandum to the Com-

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missioners is that this election was decided not upon the voting but upon the construction of the list of candidatures in fact. That I will go into in a moment, if I may; but as emphasising that, I point out that you get the same result whether you take it on the free voting system or the free party voting system; and I see Count Goblet d'Alviella said here that you would have got the same result with the Belgian list system. So really this test election is not a test of what the Society's machinery can do, but it simply shows how very effectively the list had been constructed. Carrying this out on the free party voting system, of course the whole of Mr. Asquith's surplus is now distributed within the party, and the result is that Mr. Lloyd George stands with 7,700 votes instead of 7,400, and the other candidates have slightly increased polls. That has been distributed proportionately; that is to say, approximately as proportionately as one can in a case of this kind, and the whole result is that about 320 votes have been saved to the party, because the cross voting when Mr. Asquith's second preferences came to be distributed was to the extent of about 320 or 330 votes in the test election. The same thing goes on with Mr. Balfour's votes; they are distributed within the party as before, and the saving there amounts to 219 to the party. When Mr. Lloyd George's surplus comes to be distributed the same thing happens; and the saving to the party is, on the fourth count, very heavy, because 1,412 votes went over on that distribution of third preference votes to the Labour party which are now saved to the Liberal party. So that the total saving in that case is 1,520 votes, and so on, and so on—it all works out very much like that, until you come to the distribution of N.'s votes on the fifth count. "N." in the test election, had numbered 702 votes on the fifth count, but by reason of there being no cross voting up to this point he had only 398 votes in the fourth case. The consequence is he has not enough votes to be distributed to the extent of 657. Substantially his votes have been halved, and I halve the distributable votes, and I distribute them as they were distributed in fact. This is supposed to be a free voting party—the K. party, which was heterogeneous, at any rate it included Lord Hugh Cecil in it—and I treat it as a free voting party except in the case of L. and M., so N.'s votes were distributed as they were actually in the test election, only taking 1 for 2. The same kind of thing happens when the others are distributed; there are fewer distributable votes to be distributed; but in every case I have observed a proportion to the actual figures in the test election. The whole result of that is that in the end Mr. Burt is elected by Liberal votes alone and elected, as a matter of fact, with a full quota. Not absolutely alone, because I think there was a little cross voting from the K. party when K.'s votes were distributed; but he does not benefit by L.'s votes.

2576. He chiefly gets them from B. ?—Yes, that is where he makes his great gain, on the distribution of B.'s votes. The result of that is that he is carried in by a full quota and carried in by liberal votes; so that from a party point of view the result is very different, although as a mere matter of personnel it is the same. What I suggest is that an election occurring in fact would always be carried out at least with as rigorous attention to party considerations as is implied in what I have called free party voting. Therefore I suggest that Case 4 is what would really happen, and that Case 4 indicates that there would be no substantial advantage to be derived by minorities from the operation of this scheme, and that so far from minimising the operation of party machinery, on the contrary, it would place an irresistible temptation in the way of the parties to use it.

2577. You think the strongest party—the best organised party—would always derive the fullest advantage out of it ?—It appears to me they would always derive the very fullest advantage from it.

2578. The less organised minority would not obtain its due share ?—I think it would be very much as at present. In fact, I think there would be rather less opportunity for minorities than there is at present. If I may illustrate that by the figures of the Dundee

election at the last General Election, that was a case in which, under our existing arrangements, the minority carried a candidate. It is a double-seated constituency, and they carried one of the two seats. The figures are these: Mr. Edmund Robertson, 9,276; Mr. Wilkie, Labour candidate, 6,833; Mr. Robson, the second Liberal, 6,122; and two Conservatives, who had 3,865 and 3,183 respectively.

2579. (Lord Loches.) Have you the analysis of the voting in that case ?—I am taking it from Whitaker's Almanac.

2580. But you can get the actual figures ?—These are the actual figures.

2581. No, these are the results. You can get full particulars of the cross voting—how many voted for me (I was the first candidate), and how many for No. 2, and so forth ?—No, I have not those figures.

2582. Do not you think you ought to have them before you pronounce any opinion ?—I was not venturing to pronounce an opinion, but it would be more convenient certainly to have the actual analysis, and on that suggestion I will suppress this for the present.

2583. You can get a full analysis from the "Dundee Advertiser" ?—I will make a point of doing that.

2584. The figures show how many voted for each candidate alone—how many for A. and B., how many for A. and C., how many for A. and D., and how many for C. and B., and so forth ?—Yes; that would not quite carry me home, because it would not show me how first and second preferences would be allotted. I have made a rough-and-ready calculation as to how they would probably be allotted upon these results, and one would, no doubt, even with the full return, have to make the same sort of assumption; but I confess it would be better to have the right figures.

2585. (Chairman.) You do not take any exception to the actual practical working of the Proportional Representation system ?—To the practical working—yes; because what I suggest with regard to that is, that it would involve a most serious increase in the cost and labour of by-elections. That point has been brought before the Commission, and it was dealt with better than I could deal with it by Mr. Dundas White. He expressed, as a matter of knowledge and experience, what I should have supposed as a matter of theory. But there is one point I should like to add to Mr. Dundas White's evidence, and it is this: I should like to put into figures what he put in more or less general words. The by-elections average about 13 or 14 a year, and if you take the duration of a Parliament to be five or six years, that means that you have something like 70 or 80 by-elections in the duration of a full term Parliament. That means, as matters stand, about 10 per cent. of the constituencies have to be canvassed, and about 10 per cent. of the House has to be renewed. Under the Society's system all these constituencies would be very much increased in size, and although one does not know exactly, because they have not put forward any scheme of redistribution, how it would work out, I have assumed that on an average they would be not less than four times their present size. If you take the 670 seats, or 650 constituencies, and divide them by four, you get about 160 or 170, and in that case you would have 40 per cent. of the constituencies, instead of 10 per cent., which would have to be canvassed in the course of a Parliament. If you assume that a by-election is just as expensive—and I understand it is liable to be more expensive than a General Election—the by-elections would in that case represent in labour and in money 40 per cent. as much as the General Election, instead of 10 per cent. only, as at present; and it seems to me that is a very formidable increase in the burden which would fall upon candidates. Here it has been said that candidates would not be at any more trouble than at present, although at some more expense, because they already do all that human nature can do. That, of course, is conclusive *pro tanto*, but that, I take it, only refers to the time immediately preceding the election, and although they no doubt do fill in their time for the few days or few weeks immediately preceding the election, there is no

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reason why they should not extend their canvass over a very much longer protracted period, and I imagine that would happen if the constituencies were increased. I imagine that though in a sense they could not occupy themselves more completely than they do now, they would find the burden increased in that way, by its being extended over a longer period, very seriously indeed, and the mere burden of additional expense would, I imagine, be a very formidable matter. It strikes me it would work in this way. The only people who would be able substantially to stand the labour and expense of by-elections in that case would be people who could afford to give their time to these matters without personal sacrifice, and who are in the fortunate position of having their expenses paid for them.

2586. It has been suggested that although the candidates would stand for the whole division, they should select, when first elected, in the order of the poll, a particular portion of the constituency for which each should be responsible, and the by-election should only be held in that locality. Would that meet your objection? It was a suggestion put forward by Mr. King?—I have not seen it at all. I think I understand the suggestion is that he should select an electoral district for himself, identify himself with that district, and be elected by that district.

2587. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) He should represent that district, and if there is to be a by-election the by-election should be for that district only?—I think if that were otherwise unobjectionable it would meet my objection. It obviously raises questions as to whether the rest of the constituency would be satisfied with the arrangement, but that is not a matter on which I could usefully assist the Commission.

2588. (*Chairman.*) In your opinion would this scheme result in the proportion returned to Parliament being more in accordance with the wishes of the electorate or not?—I think not. When I say that, I mean I do not see any reason to think that it would.

2589. You admit the tendency now is for the representation of the majority to be far in excess of what it is entitled to?—Quite clearly.

2590. If an equitable arrangement could be arrived at by which that could be prevented, would it meet with your approval?—That is a very difficult question. If I may answer that fully, that seems to me to depend on other considerations besides the mere consideration of proportional representation, that is to say, the abstract equity of proportional representation. It strikes me that in the actual constitution of Parliament at the present time the most serious difficulty of all in the way of proportional representation is the suppressed Irish vote, and that as long as you have a large body of Irish representatives who are not popularly elected at all, proportional representation is out of the question, and it seems to me to be a fatal defect in the Society's scheme that it does not deal with the problem of Irish representation at all. If I am to assume that the Irish representation is to be left out of the question, then I should think that the swing of the pendulum is enormously important, because it is of vital consequence that you should have a majority in Parliament sufficient to sustain the ministry and keep the Administration going, and that, as a matter of fact, is secured, as matters stand, by this excessive representation of the majority which enables the majority to be independent of the rolling cargo of the Irish vote. If you had a scheme which included Ireland, and did not involve any such problem, and was clear of any such complication as I have just been pointing out, I should think very valuable results indeed might follow from proportional representation; but if you leave the Irish problem unsolved I think proportional representation would be very perilous.

2591. There would be undoubted drawbacks, as you point out, as to the chance in the method of counting, but do you think they would be counterbalanced at all?—When I said a system of proportional representation, I was not speaking at all of the Society's scheme, because my suggestion is that the Society's scheme does not meet the requirements of the case, even giving it the benefit of every hypothesis in its favour. Supposing that it works, I do not think it meets the

case. May I generalise the objections, stating shortly what seems to me to be the points at which the Society's scheme fails to meet the case. I take it the problem presents three features—that is to say, you have to avoid the waste of voting power which results from what I may call congestion where you have a large surplus of votes given to one candidate, as of course was illustrated by Mr. Asquith's votes at the test election. I call that congestion; and you have to get over that difficulty. Another difficulty you have to face is the possible difficulty of diffusion where the party runs more candidates than it can carry, and the diffusion of its votes causes a large number of votes to be wasted as was the case, for instance, of the Conservative party at the last General Election. They ran some 537 candidates, and their total voting power was only equal to the carrying of 240 candidates, so that the diffusion of their voting power over so large a candidature resulted in their not getting their 240, but only 144. That is the mischief of diffusion you have to provide against. The third mischief is the mischief of the suppressed vote in unpolled constituencies. Those being the three things you have to consider, the Society's scheme contains what, so far as I am able to judge, is a perfect system for dealing with congestion. But my criticism of that is that that congestion does not occur under our existing system, and the only necessity for dealing with it is that it would occur if you introduce the large constituencies which the Society advocates, when you would get congestion and would have to deal with it.

They have dealt with it on the footing of its being incidental to the other parts of their scheme. I think they have dealt with it effectively; in fact almost too effectively, because their system seems to me to lead to diffusion. As I pointed out in going through their test election, there was a loss to the party in the diffusion of Mr. Lloyd George's votes, of 1,500, all of which were practically lost. So I think they a little overdo it, but still, for its purpose, it seems to be quite a complete scheme. Then their method of dealing with the mischief of diffusion is two-fold. They first propose the large constituency, which would be large enough to enable the party to concentrate, and in the next place they propose this dividing up of the votes given to defeated candidates. Those two things they suggest. With regard to those my criticism is that as to the large constituencies it seems to me to be very doubtful indeed whether it would produce the result that they seek. I think Mr. Parker Smith gave the Commission some evidence about that, and his view was a view which would also have occurred to me, that it would not make very much difference, within the limits, to which you could practically increase your constituencies—the limits within which the matter has been discussed before the Commissioners—in the probability of your getting an overwhelming majority in localities; you would still have to set off one constituency against another as you do at present. It would not make very much difference in that respect. Then, with regard to their system of distributing the votes of defeated candidates, I have already pointed out, in discussing the test election, how extremely uncertain it is. It seems to me it is just as likely to cut the wrong way. You never can tell. The party managers would soon learn that they could not count with any probability upon getting any more advantage than they would suffer detriment from those remote preferences, and, in fact, I think the rule would be never to give a preference beyond your own party, so I do not think anything would come of that. As to that, it seems to me the Society's scheme is of very doubtful efficiency. With regard to the suppressed vote they make no suggestion at all, and that seems to me to be a fatal blot in their scheme.

2592. (*Lord Loches.*) What do you mean by the suppressed vote?—A vote that is suppressed at unpolled constituencies—uncontested elections.

2593. I do not quite see what you mean?—May I just illustrate. At the last General Election the Irish Nationalists obtained 83 seats.

2594. In Ireland?—No, 83 seats in Parliament.

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2595. Including the one in Liverpool?—Yes. They had 82 seats in Ireland, but for those 83 seats they only contested nine elections, and of those nine contested elections I think two were contested between Nationalists, so that they were practically not contested. You know nothing at all about the popular opinion which lay behind those uncontested results. In the case of uncontested seats in England, Scotland or Wales, it no doubt does mean that there is an overwhelming preponderance of local feeling in favour of the candidate who takes the uncontested seat. That is really a popular election but with the figures undisclosed, but it is not so at all in Ireland, because there is no popular election, and as a matter of fact I suppose there is no popular opinion on questions of administration, and on a great majority of the questions which Parliament has to consider, the Irish constituents have never formed an opinion; so it is an undeveloped opinion. The uncontested seats—the unpolled constituencies in Ireland—are not at all like uncontested seats in the United Kingdom. That is what I mean by saying that a scheme which does not deal with the unpolled constituencies seems to me to be open to fatal objection.

2596. (Chairman.) Is not it the contention of the Society that in places which are overwhelmingly represented by one party now their scheme will give a minority a chance of obtaining one or two representatives?—My suggestion is it would not. That is why I put forward these hypothetical polls which seem to me to show that wherever there is an overwhelming majority, the overwhelming majority can carry any number of seats. In fact their scheme appears to me to give more advantage to the majority in the way of economising its voting power, than to the minority. So my view is that they would not, as the result of their scheme, confer any advantage on minorities.

2597. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) You think their scheme will give no advantage to minorities and no advantage to what may be called the Independent member?—That is so.

2598. (Chairman.) Apart from the actual proposals of the Society, are there any schemes which you think are more advantageous?—I have taken the liberty of suggesting what I call here an alternative scheme, and I put that before the Commission in the form of a printed document which is based on this assumption. My suggestion is that if you want proportional representation you can have it as the result of elections conducted as they are conducted at the present moment. My document headed, "The Alternative Scheme based on the results of a General Election conducted as at present" works that out. It is in the hands of the Commissioners, but I think it would be most convenient if I go through it shortly. The General Election of 1906 yields, upon analysis, the distribution of the aggregate votes cast, which is exhibited in my Table I. The short results are that the Liberals had a total vote of 46½ per cent.; the Conservatives of 43½ per cent.; the

Labour vote was 8½ per cent.; the Nationalist vote was a half of 1 per cent.; and the Socialist and unattached groups, recorded a vote of 1 per cent. That must be, so far at any rate as the contested seats go, the basis of the criterion by which you would try any proportional representation scheme. A proportional representation scheme would be successful exactly in proportion as it approximated to that result.

2599. The actual votes cast?—The actual votes cast. It will be convenient, perhaps, if I add a figure to the figures in that table. The total poll being 5,607,000, and the contested seats being 552, the average poll per seat was 10,158. I draw attention to that figure because it seems to me that the Society, and indeed very generally the critics of our existing system, have not done it quite justice. I think there is a very general disposition to belittle the practical sagacity with which our present electoral system has been worked out. Our constituencies are, as a matter of fact, constructed to approximate to 10,000 voters, and the thing works out sufficiently well because it appears that in the contested election of 1906, 10,000 voters did poll for every seat. Of course that includes both majorities and minorities. The average for a candidate would be somewhere about 5,000. It would be interesting to note how, in comparison with that average, the parties come out. The Liberal candidates numbered 474 at that election, and they averaged a poll of 5,473. The Conservative candidates were 537 in number and their average poll was 4,500. The Labour candidates were 78 in number, and their average poll came over 6,169. The Nationalist candidates were 10 in number, and they polled only 2,800 on the average; of the remainder, the Socialists, 10 in number, polled 3,800; the Socialists and unattached Independent candidates, numbering 17, came out with 3,800. So you get this: The average Labour candidate was supported by the highest number of voters, 6,000. Next in order is the Liberal, who comes out with 5,400. Some considerable distance behind is the Conservative with 4,500, and the Nationalists and Socialists are upon an average almost fanciful candidatures. With regard to the Socialists, it is not fair to put it simply in that way, because at least two of them made very large polls indeed. Mr. Keir Hardie had a poll of 10,000, and Mr. Philip Snowden had a poll of 10,000. Those were by no means fanciful candidatures. The result of this election was that 350 Liberals, 144 Conservatives, 47 Labour representatives, 9 Nationalists and 2 Socialists secured seats. In addition 114 members were returned unopposed, and the whole of this result is shown by Table B., where you have the percentage of elected representatives and the percentage in the total House. If you compare the two columns you will see that the only substantial change is in the Nationalist representation. The Nationalist representatives sitting for unpolled constituencies are in so preponderating a number that they lower the percentages in all the other cases, but nothing else of substance is noteworthy.

TABLE B.

Party.	Elected Representatives.	Percentage to Elected House.	Returned Unopposed.	Total Membership.	Percentage to Total House.
Liberal - - - -	350	63·3	23	373	56·0
Conservative - - -	144	26·8	13	157	23·5
Labour - - - - -	47	8·5	4	51	7·7
Nationalist - - -	9	1·6	74	83	12·5
Socialist - - - -	2	0·3	0	2	0·3
Total - - - - -	552	100·0	114	666	100·0

2600. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) How do you bring out the total membership of 666?—I worked, as a matter of fact, upon this little book of Whitaker, and I think at the time this was compiled there were some few returns not yet made. My figures come out to 666 instead of 670. I could not make it right, because so far as I know I have not got the figures for the remaining four seats.

2601. It does not affect it in substance?—No, it is very difficult to get these returns in a perfectly accurate form, because they are not official, but I have done the best I could. Table C. shows how, dealing only with the elected House, you would have to reconstitute it to revise the membership in order to make it proportionally representative. The first two columns of Table C. coincide with the first two columns of

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[Continued.]

Table B. They are only reprinted for convenience of reference. The percentage of the revised membership corresponds with the third column of Table A. and is reprinted for convenience. The problem is to fill up the column "revised Membership" to make it correspond with the percentage shown in the last column. You have the figures there. For that purpose you would have to reduce the Liberal representation to 257 and increase the Conservative representation to 240, and this is a point to which I wish to draw particular attention—the Labour representation is wholly unchanged. The fact that at that general election the Labour representatives secured their exact proportion strikes me as being a matter which ought not to be lost sight of, because it bears out what I say, that our existing system has been constructed with very considerable practical sagacity, and is very far indeed from being injurious to minorities. The Nationalists elected to the House must be reduced very considerably and the Socialists and unattached people are entitled to an increase up to five. It comes to this: The Liberal excess is $16\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the Conservative defect is $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the Nationalist excess is $1\frac{1}{10}$ per cent., and the Socialist defect is $\frac{2}{10}$ of 1 per cent. It thus appears that the Liberal membership must be reduced by 93; the Conservative membership increased by 96; the Nationalist Party reduced by 6, and the Socialist groups increased by 3. There are more ways than one of carrying out that operation. The most natural thing perhaps would be that the Liberals should concede 93 seats to the Conservatives, and the Nationalists should concede 3 seats, and that the Nationalists should then concede 3 more seats to the unattached groups; but that could not be done, because you had not the necessary contests, that is to say, there are no contested seats which could be conceded by Nationalists to Socialists for instance. So there is only one way in which the matter can be practically arranged, and that is by the Nationalists' conceding all their 6 seats to the Conservatives and then the Socialists' demand must be satisfied by the concession of Liberal seats. That is a very inconvenient arrangement because it involves the sacrifice of very large majorities, but I wish to point out that it is not arbitrary on my part, but it is forced upon me, and is essentially a portion of the scheme. The question then arises: How are those seats to be selected which are thus to pass from the local majority to the local minority. I have assumed the right principle to be that the smallest majorities are to be sacrificed. Thus, it being necessary to award 90 Liberal seats to Conservative candidates, I have taken for this purpose the 90 seats secured by Liberals in competition with Conservatives by the smallest majorities. The result is shown in Table D. which is printed here at the end of the memorandum. It contains a list of the seats so conceded, and gives also the majorities by which they were held as the result of actual election. It will be seen that the highest majority which comes here in question, is 573, and that the Liberal majorities which have to be sacrificed average only 3.75 per cent. of the votes polled. That total figure does not appear in the print, but that is how it works out. In like manner the 6 Nationalist seats to be surrendered to Conservative competitors are those held by the six

smallest majorities (set out in Table E.). Here the majorities range as high as 1,621, and the average percentage of the total poll is just over 10 per cent. So that is not nearly such a neat operation as the other. To complete the readjustment 3 seats must be taken from Liberal holders in favour of Socialist candidates. Northampton and Bradford must, on the principle of sacrificing the smallest available majorities, be chosen. In both cases the contest was a triangular one, and in both cases the Socialist candidates stood at the bottom of the poll. It is, therefore, a formidable anomaly that has to be faced. The results are exhibited in Table F. I may say at once that that does not look to me a practicable thing at all—that Table F.—and I should not suggest it as a practicable thing. I put it in here simply because it is the working out of the simple mechanical system which I give for the purpose of illustration. Here it will be seen that the largest majority is upwards of 3,000. The average percentage of majority to the total poll is 30 per cent. The contested seats having been allocated, there remain the unopposed returns to be considered. These number 114, and are, therefore, sufficiently numerous to affect, in a substantial measure, the distribution of party strength. These must accordingly be dealt with and, applying in a somewhat amplified form the principle of considering electoral weight, I have dealt with them in the following way:—First, I find that the total number of registered voters in these unpolled constituencies is 917,284. This figure, therefore, represents the electoral weight attributable to those constituencies in relation to the entire country. The total number of registered electors in the United Kingdom at the date of the election having been 7,266,708, it follows that these unpolled constituencies are entitled to 12.6 per cent. of the entire House. To get at this result, the number of the uncontested seats must be reduced to 80, and, following the rule already laid down, I have reduced the number by striking out the smallest constituencies. The names of these constituencies and of their representatives are given in Table G. In dealing with this group of seats, I have not found it practicable to pay any heed to distinctions of party, and, of course, it is not possible to replace the dispossessed Member, since there is no rival candidate who can be dealt with on the footing of *proximus accessit*. The result is that retrenchment has in this case to be carried twice as far as in the case of the contested seats in order to effect the desired redress in the balance of representation. That may seem to be a hardship, especially as the rule of sacrificing the smallest possible quantity of electoral force causes the sacrifice to fall mainly on one political party. The hardship of that is, however, more apparent than real, for that party is one that is greatly over-represented—upon a merely numerical basis of calculation—in a full House, and, moreover, the difficulty is entirely a difficulty of its own making. It results from the mischievous action of the Irish party in substituting a political machine for the free institution of popular election, and in practically abolishing in the Irish constituencies the system by law appointed for the return of Members of Parliament. Then the composition of the reconstituted House is exhibited in an analysed form in Table H.

TABLE H.

Party.	Popularly Elected.	Elected Unopposed.	Conceded on Revision.	Total.	Percentage.
Liberal - - - -	257	23	0	280	44.3
Conservative - - -	144	11	96	251	39.7
Labour - - - -	47	4	0	51	8.1
Nationalist - - -	3	42	0	45	7.1
Socialist - - - -	2	0	3	5	0.8
Total - - - -	453	80	99	632	100.0
Percentage - - -	71.7	12.7	15.6	100.0	

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[Continued.]

2602. (*Lord Lochee.*) How do you propose to deal with these constituencies?—You dispossess the existing Members, and what do you put in the place of them?—I do not propose to fill their places at all.

2603. Reject them altogether?—Yes. The local connection is purely nominal as matters stand. The candidate has never even been before the constituency in a popular sense.

2604. All these elections are Irish?—Yes, and with two exceptions are all Nationalists.

2605. Is that accidental?—Purely accidental. If contested elections had taken place almost all these candidates would have held their seats. The whole result of that revision is that you get a House consisting of 453 popularly elected Members, who are the residue left by the revision of the original election. Then you get those who are unopposed, and, of course, as the result of what has happened, the Conservative seats are cut down by two, and the Nationalist seats are cut down by, I think, 32. The popularly elected House represents $71\frac{1}{10}$ per cent., so that it is substantially a popularly elected House. The unopposed seats are $12\frac{1}{10}$ per cent. The seats conceded on revision amount only to 15.6 per cent; so that although the operation has had to be a very severe one in this case, because the swing of the pendulum was quite extreme at the last election, the redress is effected by what is not a very drastic measure of revision, and the whole result is that you get a Parliament consisting of over 44 per cent. of Liberals, 39.7 per cent. Conservatives, 8 per cent. Labour Members, 7 per cent. Nationalists, and $\frac{1}{10}$ ths of 1 per cent. Socialists.

2606. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) Any one of those seats in Table G. could be saved by a contest?—Practically, any one of them.

2607. Therefore, if at a subsequent election two Nationalists or two Unionists were to run against one another in one of your Group G. constituencies it would be transferred from Table G. to Table F.?—I do not think so. That raises a debateable question. My own view about it is that it would have to be a real contest, and that a contest between two Nationalists, for example, should be regarded as no contest for the appointment of seats.

2608. The real basis of your theory is that uncontested seats in Ireland are totally different from any other uncontested seats, in that the Irish party has deliberately abandoned the system of popular voting?—Yes.

2609. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) All seats in Ireland are different from other seats?—I think that is so.

2610. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Would it be fair to say that your alternative scheme is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle that the number of the Members elected ought to bear a due proportion to the number of electors returning them, or is that putting it too high?—It is not a *reductio ad absurdum*, but it is clear that you can only carry it out rigorously to the extent of 72 per cent. It is a *reductio ad absurdum*. Looking at this as representing what any practical scheme of proportional representation would result in substantially, supposing this were being seriously considered as a system of proportional representation, there are one or two manifest blots in it, and I should like just to point out to the Commissioners that those blots could very easily be remedied. In the first place, taking Table D., that is intended to effect a redress of what I may call a $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. grievance, that is to say, it is to satisfy the Conservative demand for proportional representation. You create an anomaly in every one of those constituencies if you give the seat away from the majority to the minority candidate and you have therefore to consider that you are making one anomaly for the purpose of getting rid of another anomaly and you have to consider whether you are paying too great a price. The average of this anomaly is $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and if you could get rid of a 17 per cent. anomaly at the cost of a $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. anomaly I should think you are doing very good business. There is one case, the case of Mr. Morton who has a majority of 450 and sits for Sutherland. The majority, although only 450, is in fact a $19\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. majority upon the local poll. Now I could not think

it would be a proper thing to incur an anomaly of $19\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., in order to cure an anomaly of $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Therefore in suggesting this scheme to the Commission I should like to say that I do not for a moment suggest that such an anomaly as that should be incurred, and I think therefore the scheme would be properly represented, as it presents itself to my mind, by saying that two conditions have to be fulfilled before a seat is to be transferred. In the first place you would have to show that the party which holds the seat is over represented, and that of course is done. It is shown that the party is over represented to the extent of 93 seats, and therefore it cannot complain if 93 seats have to be conceded. You ascertain by taking the 93 lowest majorities which are the seats which have to be conceded. It does not follow that the aggrieved party can claim those particular seats, but I think the Conservatives would be able to claim every one of those seats, except Mr. Morton's, because in every case the majority is less than 17 per cent. except that one case where it rises to 19 per cent. Therefore I suggest that this would be a perfectly practicable scheme if it were held that Mr. Morton could hold that seat personally, because, although the party could not defend it he could, seeing that he held it by a majority greater than the majority which claims the seat. In the same way, taking Table E., I should think the last two seats, St. Stephen's Green and Galway County, could be held in the same way, 32 and 43 per cent. respectively. Similarly with Table F., where the percentage rises to 27, 30, and 33 per cent., there should be no question of conceding those seats. There is one other point which has engaged the attention of the Commission on which I should like to say a word in reference to this scheme—the question of the representation of Wales. As the mere automatic result of the operation of this scheme the Welsh get four representatives, the Montgomery district with a majority of 83; Radnorshire with a majority of 175; Flint district with a majority of 376; and Denbigh district, the largest one of all, with a majority of 573. So the automatic result is this—Taking the Liberal vote in Wales at 53 per cent., Conservatives 31 per cent., and Labour 15 per cent., you have, as matters stand, of elected representatives, 16 Liberals, 3 Labour representatives and no Conservatives. As the result of revision you would have had 12 Liberals, 4 Conservatives and 3 Labour men, so that the percentages would work out 63 per cent. Liberal against a 53 per cent. vote; 21 per cent. Conservatives against a 31 per cent. vote; and Labour 16 per cent. against a 15 per cent. vote; a very fair approximation indeed to proportional representation.

2611. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) What do those asterisks indicate in your table?—The Members who sat for the constituency before the election. That works out in this way. The result of the revision is that 48 out of the 90 substituted Members were Members in the previous Parliament, that is to say, in over 50 per cent. of the cases Members simply retained their seats. I put that in because I thought it interesting as showing that there could be nothing like a substantially real grievance in the constituencies at the results of this revision. My submission is that there you have in outline at least a scheme which would effect all that anybody wants and would effect it without any change of machinery at all. So that all the elaborate change which is suggested to you must, to say the very least of it, be quite unnecessary.

2612. (*Chairman.*) Would not your scheme rather ride rough-shod over local feeling and aspirations?—My suggestion is it would not, and that is why I put those asterisks in. In over 50 per cent. of the revised constituencies the old Member would simply retain his seat, and he would retain his seat with nothing more in any case than a majority of 17 per cent. against him, so that I take it there could not be any feeling of serious grievance in the constituencies.

2613. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) That is the suggestion of the purge we used to hear about in the 17th Century?—All these schemes suggest a purge.

2614. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) How would you deal with a place like North Tyrone, where nobody ever gets

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[Continued.]

a majority of 20 or 30. Would not that district be permanently disfranchised? The other man would always get in?—That may quite well be so. I daresay that would be so under any possible system of proportional representation.

2615. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) It would be a somewhat Hibernian method?—That may be so.

2616. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) It would be rather like a donkey race where the last one wins?—No, I do not think the other man would get in, because he would have a very heavy majority against him. He can only capture a seat if the majority against him is proportionately less than the majority in virtue of which he claims. I do not think the North Tyrone seat would be disturbed at all.

2617. (*Lord Lochee.*) I do not quite understand whether or not you think the Society's scheme would yield the result they expect?—I think it would not. I think it would fail to do that.

2618. Why do you think so?—Because, I think, in point of fact, its counting machinery tends more to the advantage of majorities than of minorities.

2619. You think it a sort of accident that it apparently had a successful result in the last test election?—Yes. With regard to that test election, if you will look at the list you will find it is divided up in this way. You have three sets of party candidates who are nominally four each, four Liberal, four Conservative, three Labour, and an Independent in the person of Lord Hugh Cecil, but in fact there are three of those, as indeed the first count shows, who are ineffective candidates. So that the party candidature is really reduced to three Liberals, two Conservatives, three Labour, and one Independent, and from those nine candidates you have to elect five, and you cannot make the choice unproportional. There is no way of getting five of one party. It was a foregone conclusion. It must be a proportionately representative result. As I mentioned just now, any way of treating these figures gives substantially the same result.

2620. Have you had much practical experience of elections?—No, my only experience of elections has been assisting my friends occasionally at contested elections. I have never been a candidate.

2621. Do you think, in the case of a voter having more than one vote under this system or under the present, there would be a disposition to deal more lightly with the second vote than with the first?—I imagine that there would, and I imagine that is established by the results of this test election. For instance, in the distribution of Mr. Asquith's surplus, of the second preference votes, 5,000 went to his own party, and only 320 were cross-voted. That is to say, substantially it was wholly a party vote; but when Mr. Lloyd George's surplus came to be distributed and you were dealing with third and not second preference votes, half of them were given away from the party—it was a half-and-half vote.

2622. And in Mr. Long's case also?—But of course it is a little difficult to deal with Mr. Long's case in the

same way, because so small a proportion of his votes were distributable—only 25 per cent.—so one does not know quite; but the comparison between the second preference and third preference votes given for Mr. Asquith is perfectly rigorous, because all were disposed of. You had a very large amount of cross-voting in the second case and not any to speak of in the first.

2623. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) As to the question of the districts where the majority is apt to be rather narrow either way, I believe it is notorious that in this country there are certain constituencies where the majority is generally quite small, either one way or the other?—Yes.

2624. When the pendulum swings in the Liberal direction, these places return a Liberal usually by a small majority; when it swings back in the Unionist direction, they return a Unionist, also, as a rule, by a comparatively small majority. Now, under your system, as both sides under the present system are always over represented in Parliament, or nearly always, these narrow majority constituencies would have to be conceded to the other side?—Yes.

2625. It would, therefore, automatically follow that they would year after year, decade after decade, be represented by the man they did not elect. They would go on always being represented by the very person they had rejected?—It would be by the man they had very nearly elected.

2626. But that is not the same thing?—Not quite the same thing, but it is an approximation to it.

2627. In many walks of life we find a little difference is a very important thing?—If you look upon that constituency as made up of persons, those persons would be in that situation under any system of proportional representation.

2628. But there is a great difference between hitting the target and just missing it?—Yes.

2629. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) But it is a weak point in your scheme that all these constituencies must always be on the Opposition side?—With great respect, I think not. I think it would very rarely happen that they would always be on the Opposition side. If you look at Table D, you will see the majorities are extremely small—573 is the largest of them. I do not know—and I am speaking now quite at large—but I imagine there is hardly any constituency in the country where the majority is always under 573.

2630. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) In horse-racing there is such a thing as pulling a horse, and under this system there would be a strong temptation just to lose an election by 10 or 20 votes, and then the seat would be transferred to you?—No; with great respect, that would not be the situation in the least. You would not be better off by losing it, instead of winning it; you could only capture the seat if you were under-represented.

Now, if you are underrepresented, you would hold the seat whatever the majority, so there is no temptation to pull the horse.

The witness withdrew.

Mr. SKINNER called and examined.

2631. (*Chairman.*) You were Liberal agent in the last election at Attercliffe?—I was.

2632. You have had considerable experience in electioneering?—I have been Liberal agent in Sheffield nearly 30 years, and have had large experience outside Sheffield.

2633. We would chiefly like to hear your views on the recent by-election at Sheffield, which is typical of what has happened in various parts of the country in three-cornered contests. In fact, you had four candidates standing there last time?—That is so.

2634. Will you give the actual figures?—I do not think I have the actual figures, but approximate figures will be quite sufficient for our purpose. The Socialist (Labour) polled 3,500, the official Conservative 3,300, Liberal 3,100, and the Independent Conservative 2,800. There was only 700 difference between the bottom candidate and the winning candidate.

2635. What, in your opinion, was the real opinion of the constituency, supposing it a straight fight between Conservative and Liberal?—My feeling is the Conservative would have won, and even if the principle of casting a second ballot had been possible, or the transferable vote had been legal, my feeling is still the Conservative would have been elected.

2636. What we wish to arrive at is a method by which the true opinion of a constituency would obtain representation. Do you consider that the scheme of second ballot, or alternative vote, or any other scheme would meet the case?—I do. My feeling is strongly in favour of what is called the transferable vote. I am chairman of the Society of Certificated Liberal Agents, and we have lately been considering this question very fully, and, speaking for myself, and also my professional brethren, we are strongly in favour of the transferable vote—the alternative selection.

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2637. That is not the scheme proposed by Lord Courtney or the Proportional Representation Society?—No. Speaking for myself, and also for my brethren, we are opposed to that.

2638. You prefer what is known as the alternative vote?—We do.

2639. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) With single-member constituencies?—That is so.

2640. (Chairman.) Do you consider that is a scheme which would be readily taken advantage of by the electorate?—I do. I think all sections of the community would consider it satisfactory.

2641. You think the ordinary elector would find no difficulty in recording his vote?—I think the British elector would welcome the suggestion.

2642. Do you consider the practical difficulty serious?—I do not consider there would be any real difficulty. The slight change from the present system would be welcomed if communities realised that the candidate who was ultimately returned had been elected by an actual majority of electors.

2643. Do you think the actual counting would produce any difficulties?—I do not think it would. The alternative selection or transferable vote really means a second or third count instead of a second or third poll, and, to my mind, there is no real difficulty in the case.

2644. In your capacity as a party organizer, do you think it would put more or less power into the hands of political organizations?—Alternative selection, I consider, would not put special power into the hands of political parties. It would be fair to all parties. It would work much fairer than second ballots. My feeling is that we should have all the advantages of second ballots, and none of the disadvantages.

2645. For instance, in this election at Attercliffe, would you have recommended your party to give an alternative vote, would you have recommended them all to vote for the official Liberal candidate?—We should have done that in the first instance.

2646. Would you have recommended them to give their alternative vote to one of the other candidates?—Had the transferable vote been the law we probably should have done so.

2647. You do not think the tendency would be to recommend your supporters to plump for one man?—No, I think people would welcome the opportunity of giving the alternative vote.

2648. But in most constituencies the majority of the party voters vote as they are told?—Yes, I take it all the turmoil and expense of an election is simply for the purpose of converting some 400 or 500 electors to vote on a particular side.

2649. The majority will vote for the party ticket?—Yes, the vast bulk of the electors would vote straight. In Sheffield if a circular was issued signed by me as representing the association, my feeling is that quite two-thirds or more of the Liberals would vote straight.

2650. Would you be in favour of making the giving of an alternative vote compulsory? It has been suggested that where no alternative vote was put down the vote should be counted as a spoiled paper. Would that meet with your approval?—No, I think not. I take it a very large proportion, approximately, one-third of the electorate, would not exercise their right of a second selection. I do not think it ought to be compulsory. I think a man ought to be free to decide for himself. I take it a very large proportion would be glad of the opportunity of making a second selection.

2651. You think there would be quite sufficient always to obtain a majority for any particular candidate?—Yes, I have many times worked out these things. On one occasion I worked out for myself the Jarrow contest. At the Jarrow election the Socialist candidate received 4,698 votes, the Conservative candidate received 3,930 votes, the Liberal candidate received 3,474 votes, and the Home Rule candidate received 2,122 votes. The Socialist candidate was returned, but by a very much less vote than if there had been only two candidates. If the principle of transferable vote as defined by Mr. Robertson's Bill of 1906 had been law, I take it there would have been in this case two further counts, and that on the second count the second selections of those who voted for the Home Rule candi-

date would be divided amongst the rest, but my feeling is that quite one-third of those voters would not recognise, or would not use their privilege of an alternative selection, and that two-thirds would. Those two-thirds would be, 1,414 of the Home Rule candidate's supporters, and these would be divided amongst the other three. My opinion is that the Home Rule voters would vote very largely as an alternative in favour of the Liberal, because we understand that Catholic electors are usually opposed to Socialists, and ordinary Irish Catholic electors are not Conservatives. I feel therefore that approximately two-thirds of those who did exercise their right of second selection would vote for the Liberal, and that the remaining one-third would be divided between the Socialist and Conservative. This would mean the addition of, say, 942 to the Liberal candidate, 235 to each of the others, and it would leave the vote thus: Socialist, 4,933; Liberal, second, 4,416; Conservative, 4,165. Then in order to arrive at a definite conclusion it would be necessary to make a third count and to divide the second selections of the Conservative, and I take it that in that case there would also be a considerable number who did not exercise their rights, and approximately we may say one-third would not vote. Dividing the remaining two-thirds who did exercise their rights my feeling is that approximately two-thirds of those would vote for the Liberal in preference to the Socialist, and eventually it would mean that the Liberal candidate who originally stood third upon the poll would come out at the head with 6,162 votes as against the Socialist with 5,806 votes, giving a definite majority to the Liberal. I have worked out other elections, but have not the figures with me. Jarrow strikes me as being practically an ideal example. I have many times addressed audiences upon this subject, and this is one of the examples I have given, and usually it has been favourably received as expressing a very fair opinion of what the transferable vote really means.

2652. The practical objection has been urged before us that it would not apply to double-member constituencies?—If the law is altered I should strongly urge—and in this I speak for my brethren, the Liberal agents of the country—that double-member constituencies be abolished.

2653. Simply divide them into two areas like other places?—Yes, exactly. Why should York with 11,000 electors have two representatives when Attercliffe, with 16,000 electors, has only one?

2654. Is there any advantage in the retention of two members for constituencies such as Derby, Leicester, or York?—My feeling is, there is not. Why not divide them? Larger constituencies are divided, and no real objection has been found to that course.

2655. That would do away with the objection to applying this system to such places. Failing this particular method of dealing with the difficulties of three-cornered contests, is there any other scheme which you would be prepared to adopt?—No, I adhere very strongly to the transferable vote.

2656. You hold strongly to the necessity of maintaining the present single-member constituencies?—I do; and my feeling is that the present party system is ample for all our present needs. I may say that I do not favour the system of proportional representation. As a matter of fact I am disposed strongly to oppose it. I feel that it would tend to the formation of small parties, and that it would send to Parliament, in my opinion, a distinctly inferior class of man to what we now get. If I may again refer to the Attercliffe election, I would use it as an example of what I mean as to the formation of smaller parties; for instance, the man at the bottom of the poll received 2,800 odd votes. He got those votes practically "off his own bat," and without any permanent organisation. He formed an organisation of his own with a most peculiar title. He called himself a "Conservative Tariff Reform Trades Union Candidate."

2657. He got a few votes from each party?—He got 2,800 votes "off his own bat" when the Liberal Association, which was well-organised, only polled 3,100—only 300 votes above him. Under the system of proportional representation the whole of

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Sheffield would be united, so we should have five candidates all running together. This man would run independent and form a party of his own. On the same principle, if in Attercliffe he polled 2,800, practically 3,000, in the whole of Sheffield he would poll nearly 15,000 votes; and under the system of proportional representation, I take it his party would be entitled to send one member to Parliament, and that he would be the one, a result which I do not think it desirable to encourage.

2658. Quite apart from this gentleman's individual capacity, do not you attach any value to what is known as the independent member?—Yes, I am bound to admit that independent members are useful.

2659. Comparatively few find their way into the House at the present moment?—That is so; but I do not think Parliament suffers severely in consequence.

2660. You attach great importance to the maintenance of the present Dual Party system?—I do.

2661. You would consider it a calamity if under the Group system the present dominance of one party should be threatened?—I should.

2662. Apart from any other change of a large character, are there any suggestions which you, as a practical agent, would like to make with reference to the conduct of elections?—I should like to see a definite change in the laws governing the taking of the poll as regards the polling being all on one day.

2663. You do not consider that would lead to practical difficulties in the conduct of elections and arrangements of the police, and the returning officers' business?—I think not. There are plenty of intelligent men in the country who can carry out the official duties in connection with any election. I should like to see a definite alteration in what we call the Corrupt Practices Acts; my feeling is that they definitely fail in the objects for which they were originally adopted, and that there ought to be drastic alterations. For instance, I think the punishment for a political offence, or an offence at an election, ought to be as for one of a criminal nature. All offences under such an Act ought to be considered criminal offences, and indemnities ought not to be allowed except in special cases. At present people receive indemnities wholesale. The fact that a man may receive an indemnity as a general principle is not conducive to purity in elections. I think it ought to be the duty of the police to maintain order and practically carry out the law in this regard just as in ordinary criminal offences. I think that intimidation ought to be considered a criminal offence. There is a great deal of intimidation which now takes place by, shall I say, ladies who go shopping. If a lady understood that what she was doing in the shape of intimidation might be considered a criminal offence for which she might be sent to gaol, we should hear practically nothing of it, as it would, in my opinion, cease to exist to any extent. Then, I think it desirable to define the time when candidature commences. For instance, a candidate now may be before a constituency three or four years, and all the time practically working as a candidate, and yet his expenses do not count. Then there is the question of subscriptions on the part of candidates. A constituency may be utterly corrupted by the subscriptions of a wealthy man. My feeling is that it ought to be made illegal for a candidate to be allowed to subscribe to anything within his constituency unless it is a definite subscription to a political association, which should not be allowed to distribute it in the way of corrupting the electors.

2664. Would you be prepared to suggest that the actual necessary expenses, like returning officers' expenses, should be borne by some public authority?—I should. I think also it ought to be made illegal for outside bodies to go into a constituency and spend money in the manner they are now allowed to do it. When an outside organisation goes in—I do not care which side it belongs to—I think the expenses that they are put to ought to go through the official election agent of the candidate they may be assisting, and no expense ought to be allowed unless it does go through his hands. I would close all licensed premises on polling day. With regard to conveyances for taking voters to poll my feeling is that this is now made a means of corruption, and therefore voluntary conveyances ought not to be allowed. If a man wants to ride to the poll and he does not own a conveyance, then he of course would have the privilege of hiring for himself but not for his neighbour. In order to meet the inconvenience which the lack of conveyances might cause I would favour polling stations being increased in number. I think that all refreshments which are now distributed so widely during an election contest ought to be forbidden. I have already referred to the fact of all polling taking place on one day; I see no practical difficulty with regard to that. I think it would tend to the promotion of purity.

2665. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) When you talk of expenses being defrayed out of public funds, do you mean the Returning Officer's charges, or do you mean all the expenses that a candidate can legally spend?—Just the official charges of the Returning Officer.

2666. You do not propose to charge on the rates or taxes the amount that he is allowed to spend on his printing, &c.?—Not what the candidate spends—no, nothing at all.

2667. Simply the amount he pays to the Returning Officer?—Yes.

2668. Then about all elections being on one day, is it not the case now that the same staff will go round a whole county on different days to different elections?—That is so.

2669. Would not it cause inconvenience if you had all the elections on one day in a county?—I think not, because there are plenty of able men who are not employed on that staff who would be available.

2670. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) You know as a matter of fact it takes longer to conduct an election campaign in a country district than in an urban district. If you have all the elections on one day, would you propose to lengthen the contest in an urban district or shorten the contest in a rural district?—You are quite right in saying it takes longer to get round a county division than a borough, but my feeling is that there is sufficient time allowed at present to get round a county division. They would have more time in a borough than they needed, but that would be no disadvantage to anyone.

2671. If all the elections are held in one day you would have to alter one or the other?—Not necessarily. It would simply mean that in a borough division they would have more time than they actually required.

2672. You mention as one necessity occasioned by doing away with the use of free conveyances, the increase of polling stations. Do you suggest any increase in the hours of polling? Do you think they are long enough?—There has been a suggestion that it should be extended from 7 in the morning to 9 in the evening, and my professional brethren favour that.

The witness withdrew.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

Thursday, 8th July 1909.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
 The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
 Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
 Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
 LL.D., D.C.L.
 The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
 Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

The Right Hon. LEWIS HARCOURT, M.P., called and examined.

2673. (*Chairman*.) You are coming here to-day entirely in your capacity as a private individual?—Entirely.

2674. And what you say will be your own private opinion, and will in no sense represent that of the Cabinet, or the Liberal party?—In no sense.

2675. You are opposed to the various schemes which have been suggested to us, and, in particular, to proportional representation?—Yes, I am strongly opposed to proportional representation. I rather hold the views of Lord Beaconsfield, that they are "refined and fantastic arrangements," which phrase, I think, has been quoted to you, "for the representation of the people." It seems to me to be designed to secure the election of those who do not command a majority in the constituencies.

2676. You agree with Mr. Lowe that the present system makes stronger that which was already strong?—Yes.

2677. In this connection do not you think that the majorities which have recently been obtained at general elections have rather exaggerated the opinion of the country?—Yes; that, I think, is probable; but I see no objection to that myself. After you have obtained the opinion of the country, I think it is desirable that you should give a strong, and even an exaggerated, emphasis to that opinion.

2678. You do not consider that the minority suffer from an injustice, in that they do not obtain representation in proportion to their numerical strength?—I think it was one of my colleagues who said that minorities were born to suffer; but I do not think there has ever been an occasion on which almost every minority has not had some representation in the House of Commons. I do not agree with John Stuart Mill's opinion that "any body of persons who are united by any ties of interest, or of opinion, should have power in the House of Commons, in order to counteract the tyranny of majorities." I think strong majorities are essential to strong government, and that there is a great danger of weak governments leaning towards unnatural alliances with the smaller sections.

2679. To obtain a majority in the first instance, do not you consider that Governments do try and bring in all the smaller sections of divergent groups which compose their party?—Yes, I think it is the general desire to combine as much support as is possible.

2680. But this attempt to attract the different groups comes now before the election, instead of after, as it would if each had due representation?—That is my view.

2681. You prefer it as it is now?—Yes, because the desire now is to attract the smaller groups to the support of the general policy of the great bulk of the party. After an election, it is more to use the small groups by making, perhaps, weak concessions to them in order to obtain that support.

2682. Do you agree with Mr. Disraeli's opinion quoted in the next paragraph in your memorandum?—Yes. He said that proportional representation was: "a proposal opposed to sound principle, the effect of which would be to create a stagnant representation and bring about a feeble executive; an admirable scheme for bringing crotchety men into the House;

"a scheme of coteries; not the politics of nations; which, if attempted, would end in chaos and confusion."

2683. Would the term "crotchety men" be your description of the independent men?—Yes.

2684. One who was allied to no particular party?—As apart from any individual whom I should not like to describe in that way, that would be my description of the so-called independent man.

2685. Great stress has been laid before us on the desirability of attracting men who stand outside all party organizations, and who show great capacity and ability. You do not think that their presence in the House of Commons is desirable?—I think that under the present system we have quite a sufficient number of them.

2686. You think it would tend to bad government if their number were materially increased?—I do.

2687. Do you attach any importance to the representation of localities?—Yes, I attach great importance to the association of the individual member with localities.

2688. Do you consider that that would be destroyed if large areas were grouped together in one constituency?—I think it would be greatly destroyed. It is difficult enough at present for an ordinary Member of Parliament, representing a large county division, to become thoroughly acquainted with it and with the electors, except over a prolonged period either of candidature or membership; but if you are to enlarge those constituencies to what, I think, has been called the ideal number of nine-member constituencies, you multiply that difficulty by nine; in fact you make it impossible for the individual ever to become associated personally with such an area.

2689. Granting that that association would cease, do you think that would be on the whole disadvantageous?—I think it would be disadvantageous to the constituency and disadvantageous to the member himself.

2690. The identity between member and constituency you think is valuable?—Very valuable.

2691. It has been suggested to us that it is not an advantage, but rather in the nature of a corrupt principle, a member nursing the constituency?—I think there are great disadvantages in what is called "nursing" now, and if your reference goes so far as any amendment of the Corrupt Practices Act, I should be willing to make suggestions to you on that basis; but even the nursing I would not surrender if it were at the price of the abolition of the personal association of the member with his constituency.

2692. Your next reference is a quotation from Mr. Bright: "Anything which nullifies the representative power and lessens the vitality of the electoral system, which puts the power in the nominees of little cliques, weakens and must eventually destroy the power and force of the Executive Government." Do you consider proportional representation would have that effect?—I understand that the object of proportional representation is to produce a number of cliques. Perhaps it would not be fair to say that that was the phrase which was used; but the object of proportional representation, as I understand it, is to have a large

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[Continued.]

number of so-called independent members, who might be called cliques of one, or cliques of two or three, and that would be the obvious result of proportional representation if it were successful, and to my mind it would be a great disadvantage to the House of Commons. Mr. Disraeli said in 1870: "What we want is to have 'the prevailing sense of the community. We do not want to have represented immature particular shades of opinion.'" Of course there was an attempt, which went on for some years, to obtain a minority representation on the old School Board, but that was abolished by the Bill of the late Government in 1902, which altered the education system, and at the time that system was being altered no proposal was made by either party, or any party, in the House of Commons to apply the minority system to the elections of School Committees of the County Councils, which had to deal with the question.

2693. In your opinion was that cumulative vote system, the old School Board system, successful?—I am not speaking with much personal knowledge of it, but from all I have heard it was not a successful system.

2694. But it did allow minorities to obtain direct representation—for instance, the Catholics?—Yes, undoubtedly.

2695. It was abolished more on account of its difficulty of working than for any other reason?—Yes, but the desire for minority representation, as secured in that way, had obviously disappeared from Parliament because no suggestion was made for its re-enactment.

2696. The fact is that nobody came forward asking for the adoption of any minority representation?—Nobody at all, that I remember.

2697. It has been suggested to us that majorities sometimes do not have the majority of the electors with them?—Yes; I have seen a suggestion made to you, and I have heard it made before, that the Parliament of 1886—the Unionist Parliament which was elected in the summer of 1886—was elected by a minority of the voters. Of course a good many fanciful calculations have to be made as to what would have been the result in the constituencies if there had been a contest, where, as a matter of fact, there was not a contest; but I think those who are competent to judge of that election do not agree with Lord Courtney's opinion that the majority in that Parliament was elected by a minority of the voters. Undoubtedly the Unionist majority which was returned was very far in excess of anything that they were entitled to by the votes which they did poll, or probably would have polled in the uncontested seats. Again, I do not see any disadvantage in that. If Lord Courtney's figures are true, and Lord Courtney's proposals were carried out, you would, as a matter of fact, in the last four or five Parliaments, have had Governments supported by extremely small majorities. That may be an advantage to the Opposition, whoever they may be at the moment, but in my opinion it is not an advantage to the country, and I think it is especially a very serious disadvantage if grave matters of foreign affairs have to be dealt with by the Government of the day.

2698. You do not think it would cause a state of things to come about so that many questions which are now matters of party controversy would be taken out of the issues between the two parties?—No, I do not see any scheme which would take matters of party controversy out of that category.

2699. It has been suggested that in Belgium, where they have adopted a proportional representation scheme, the religious differences have been much lessened by allowing each party to have fair representation?—Their religious differences in Parliament?

2700. Yes. Do you not think our differences would be lessened by each party being truly represented in a proportional sense?—I think it would require more than an Act of Parliament to remove our religious differences.

2701. It would not be religious differences in this case?—No.

2702. You have already dealt with the large constituencies?—Before we leave that, might I emphasise the fact that, in speaking of large constituencies,

whether we take the constituency as being one of five or of nine members (which, I think, is stated to be the deal one) there would be the enormous additional cost which would be entailed upon candidates by a constituency of such a size. It is quite true, if you had a strict party list of nine candidates and they pooled their expenses, their expenses ought not to be any more than at present; but if proportional representation is directed to getting in, or letting in, a few individuals and not a whole party ticket, then the cost to a single individual, say, an anti-vaccinator, or anti-something else, who is standing by himself for a nine-member constituency is obviously nine times that which it would be if he were standing for a single-member constituency. He has to have nine times as many sub-agents; he has nine times as much posting, nine times as many meetings, nine times as many voters, to try and see or to speak to. Really it would make it impossible for any human being to conduct elections on the present lines. If one man had a party ticket of nine people against him, they might be able to divide matters up and deal with it, but it would put the man of peculiar views at a very peculiar disadvantage as regards the two parties.

2703. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert*). The same consideration would apply not only to an individual but to a group or party who could not hope to obtain more than a small proportion of the nine seats?—Exactly, to any group of less than nine. It is only if you had a complete ticket of nine working together that the expenses of the individuals could be kept down even to the present figure. I am not sure that they could then be kept down.

2704. (*Chairman*). You think the actual increase in cost would be a fatal defect of the scheme?—I think one of many fatal defects in such a proposal.

2705. You consider that under the present system, minorities are not badly represented in the House?—No, I think not at all badly. Within my recollection, and it is becoming rather a long one now, I do not think there is any fad which has not been quite sufficiently represented, and quite sufficiently vocal in the House of Commons. I am not referring to one Parliament more than another. It seems to me that almost every heresy gets a hearing in that Assembly. Where a nationality has a great outstanding grievance, as has been or perhaps is the case in certain divisions of the United Kingdom, I am not at all anxious to produce an artificial minority representation, which I look upon as being rather destructive of the national feeling on particular questions. It seems to me that proportional representation has been recommended to your Commission rather specially on the ground of the desirability of getting a minority representation in the larger part of Ireland or in Wales. I do not myself feel the necessity of that, and I say that without any regard to the particular political tinge of colour of the representation.

2706. Do you consider, for instance, that the Conservatives in Wales or the Liberals in Birmingham have no special grievance?—No, none at all. The Liberals in Birmingham are quite sufficiently represented, to my mind, by Liberals in other parts of the country. I think that substantial vicarious justice is done under the present system. Mr. Gladstone, in 1884, said that single-member districts were economical, simple, and go a long way towards providing representation of minorities. I think that is quite true to-day. Lord Courtney said that the present system renders the personnel of the House of Commons unstable. I do not think it is fair to say that it is the present system which does that. I think it is more the result of unstable public opinion, or perhaps, of what is called the balancing elector. I do not think you are going to give stability to public opinion by a particular re-arrangement of the method in which voters may mark their ballot papers.

2707. You do not think it would cause the electors who live in a permanent minority, such as the Liberals in Birmingham or the Conservatives in Wales, to be given a greater interest in politics and make them take a more active part than they have hitherto done?—It is possible it may, but I do not know that anything that

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[Continued.]

you could do in Parliament would produce a greater interest, or even activity in politics, than the Liberals in Birmingham have taken, in my recollection, for the last 20 years. Though it has been unsuccessful from their point of view, it does not seem to have discouraged their activity. Lord Courtney did not seem to anticipate that his proposals would lend themselves to party wire-pulling; but, I think, that the old minority representation, when Birmingham was a single borough with a number of members, did lend itself to wire-pulling—if that is the proper name to apply to it—or at all events to a very elaborate and successful arrangement carried out under Mr. Schnadhorst by which the whole borough voted a ticket according to directions received from head-quarters, and succeeded generally, I think always, in returning the members.

2708. Generally speaking, would you say that a proportional representation scheme would tend to increase the power of the party organisation?—I do not think it would decrease it. It might make it a little more difficult and a little more complicated, I should think it is possible it might increase the power of it, but I could not tell until I had seen it in working for some years. But I see nothing in it to decrease it. It will make it more elaborate.

2709. You think they would draw up lists which they would recommend their supporters to vote for?—Undoubtedly—elaborate lists of preferences. That I have not any doubt about. Lord Balfour of Burleigh admitted before you that the old three-member constituencies were not very successful in obtaining minority representation, and he said the moderate man seldom found that he had a candidate exactly to his liking. Of course I am not a moderate man, and I believe that if the House of Commons consisted of moderate men it would be the most unpopular Assembly in the world, and possibly one of the least useful.

2710. There would be no special influence behind any such section to carry anything through?—I think not. The person who in public or before Commissions is called an independent member is generally a crank, and it is very undesirable to have a block of unattached specialists in the House of Commons who are devoted to a single interest only. The single transferable vote, as it has been put forward, seems to me to be far too complicated for the ordinary elector. You may educate your elector in the future to many things, but I think this arrangement at present is one which would produce great confusion in his mind, and even greater confusion in the ballot boxes.

2711. Would not that be temporary confusion? You would not go so far as to say that the difficulties are such that they could not be overcome?—No, because I should not argue against it on that ground. If there were no difficulties I should still be opposed to the principle and the results at which it aims. Mr. Parker Smith said that he was converted to proportional representation by the recent violent swings of the pendulum, his object being apparently to misrepresent the true public opinion of the country if the swing of the pendulum does represent that opinion. He seemed to me prepared to admit, or at all events not to deny, that the House of Commons may have been more representative of public opinion before the Reform Bill of 1832 than it has been since. Of course if that is to be the condition of affairs aimed at by proportional representation I am not prepared to go back to those times. Mr. Parker Smith, I think, in his evidence said that you could trust the good sense of Members of Parliament to know that the first business of the House of Commons is to let the King's Government go on. That good sense does not show itself habitually. It does under certain circumstances, but it is not a view which the Opposition hold unless the King's Government is, or is likely shortly to be, transferred to their keeping. I do not think you can admit the possibility of making an experiment, as has been suggested, in proportional representation by having an *ad hoc* redistribution in order to try it in some of the large boroughs of the country. You cannot try experiments of that sort which take to pieces your whole electoral system and take to pieces the composition of your House of Commons when you have got it.

2712. You do not think it would be applicable to large cities such as Birmingham or Liverpool or Glasgow?—No doubt it would be applicable but I think it would be undesirable. I think the whole system is undesirable. I think if you were to adopt such a system it would be more applicable to a concentrated population than taking nine of the present country constituencies and forming them into one, which is a nightmare to anybody who knows what electioneering is. Imagine what would be the position of a man standing at a by-election for a nine-member constituency by himself and at his own cost; I suppose he would have to cover the whole of that nine-member constituency at the by-election.

2713. It has been suggested to us that although the whole constituency would at a general election poll as one, the members, when returned, should, in the order of their election, select one portion to be responsible for, and so they would still retain local interest?—By the selection of the locality?

2714. Yes, in order of seniority. For instance, Mr. O'Connor would no doubt select the Scotland quarter of Liverpool?—But supposing he selected the Orange quarter of Liverpool, what would be the condition of Liverpool after that selection?

2715. Supposing there was a by-election there it would in all probability be lost to his party?—Yes, if he was standing again.

2716. The idea suggested is, that the by-election should be only held in that locality. Do you think that would meet the difficulty?—No, I do not. If I were by chance to be returned as a minority member for Birmingham, and were to select the Western Division as my constituency, I do not know what would happen in that Western Division or to me.

2717. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) But under the proposition as made you would not have the opportunity. The senior man, the first on the poll, would take the first choice?—The man who polled the largest number of votes?

2718. Yes; the second would have the second choice, the third the third choice, and so on?—And if I was a minority member I should have to put up with whatever quarter of Birmingham had been left by the others.

2719. Yes, you would get the odds and ends?—Then I should hardly get what has been called a selection.

2720. (*Chairman.*) So you think that would not meet the difficulty of by-elections, and the difficulties of contesting a large constituency are obvious?—Yes, the difficulties of the expense and the time which would be occupied.

2721. You do not think they would be so great that the tendency would be to allow the party to nominate their successor?—No.

2722. It has been suggested that a by-election would be practically a thing of the past under proportional representation?—I do not think that. I do not think you would ever avoid a contest where the opposition thought they had a good chance of winning. It is true that the trouble and the cost would be so great that the opposition might weigh with a little more care whether it was worth while to fight the particular seat; but if they thought they had what is called a sporting chance I do not think you would avoid a by-election in any way. Sir Charles Dilke, in one of his answers, seemed to admit that proportional representation is incompatible with the party system. I think that may possibly be true, but in my view it would be the strongest condemnation of it.

2723. You would regret anything which would tend to decrease the efficacy of the party system?—I should very much. I believe in the party system as tending to an honest enforcement of conviction rather than a dishonest accommodation to compromise.

2724. You do not think it tends to force opinion into a groove and prevent the expression of individual views?—Of course the groove is always there, but I am not sure that the opinion in the groove is not better than the opinion outside the groove.

2725. And for the purpose of Government you think having a two-party system is undoubtedly a most satisfactory form?—In my opinion far the most satisfactory.

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[Continued.]

2726. You say you believe in the party system "as tending to honest enforcement of conviction rather than dishonest accommodation to compromise." Do not you think that men, in making up their minds which party they belong to have to, sacrifice considerable convictions?—I do not think a man sacrifices considerable convictions. He undoubtedly has to accommodate small preferences to the general good, but I should not say a man has to sacrifice large convictions. If his mind is such that his large convictions lie on neither one side nor the other he belongs to a class no doubt which might come in under proportional representation, but which has so twisted and occasionally so fluid a mind that perhaps it is just as well devoted to other pursuits.

2727. You think the "cross-bench" mind is better absent?—It is better at all events in the House of Lords than in the House of Commons. I think Mr. Seager put it very truly to you when he said that proportional representation would tend to Government by the wobbler. It leads to the predominance of the crank and to the return of the anti-everything man.

2728. It has been said that the parties now-a-days are returned by the fluctuating opinion of the rather unconvinced section of the community?—Yes.

2729. Do you think the proportional representation scheme would tend to aggravate it?—I think it would. It is impossible that under any system you should have absolute numerical justice. Under the proportional representation system it is true that you might ultimately get a majority of all the talents who would only agree to differ probably.

2730. Is there any other scheme which you think would meet any of the difficulties we now suffer from? Take, for instance, the three-cornered contest for a single-member constituency?—Yes, I think it is very desirable that you should come probably to some form of second ballot. I use the words "second ballot" as covering either an ordinary single transferable vote—that is a selection at the original poll—or a second poll. I had originally rather a leaning towards a second poll as being undoubtedly simpler and as avoiding some of the difficulties of selection for the voter, and some of the undesirable tendencies which would be produced in the mind of a candidate during an election—the desire to secure the second preference of certain voters who were not his own supporters. But the disturbance to trade, the disturbance to the constituency, the greatly added cost, I do not mean only the returning officer's expenses, but the great addition to the candidate's expenses and other reasons have made me think that the second poll must be abandoned. There is also the difficulty of getting voters up to a second poll within a short time. I remember in 1886 it was said the small percentage of voters polled in July 1886 was because they had already been to the poll in October 1885. If an interval of nine months is too short a time to get them to come back to the poll, obviously an interval of a week would give you a very small and unsatisfactory second poll. Therefore I rather regretfully come to the conclusion that the single transferable vote in single-member constituencies is the best method of solution.

2731. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) We have called it the alternative vote, in order to distinguish it from the other?—Yes, that is the word I meant to use—the alternative vote.

2732. (*Chairman.*) Do you know of any practical difficulties in the way of the adoption of that in three-cornered contests?—There are fewer practical difficulties. There would be some in two-member constituencies, undoubtedly; but I should like to see single-member constituencies everywhere. The Commission are probably aware, and, I think, were reminded by Sir Charles Dilke, that Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote were in favour of universal single-member constituencies when the compromise was arrived at in 1884-5; but the two-member constituencies were preserved, owing to a certain preference which Mr. Gladstone had for them in certain cases. If you are to have an alternative vote, I think it is very desirable that you should, if possible, have single-member constituencies everywhere.

2733. Is there any advantage in the retention of the two-member constituencies, such as Southampton and Portsmouth?—No, I see none, myself.

2734. It would mean simply dividing them into two electoral divisions?—Yes, I do not think the double-member constituency tends to the better representation of minorities. I know Mr. Balfour said in 1885 that if anybody ought to wish for the representation of minorities it was he because he expected to be in a minority for the rest of his life—and in the succeeding 20 years, for 17 of them, he was in office.

2735. Have you considered any of the foreign methods of election, such as the List System in Belgium?—I have not watched them on the spot, but I have read the Parliamentary Papers which describe them and their results.

2736. You do not think any of them are capable of adoption in this country?—They are capable of adoption, no doubt, but I do not think any of them would suit our electorate so well as the single-member constituency with improvements such as the alternative vote would give.

2737. Quite apart from any fundamental change in the system of recording votes, are there any other recommendations you would like to make as to the conduct of elections?—Would your reference cover things like the payment of election expenses?

2738. We consider the compulsory expenses come under our reference?—I mean the official expenses.

2739. The official, and not the allowable, expenses?—I think it very desirable that the official expenses of the returning officer should be paid either out of local or out of national funds, I do not suggest which. But of course it is absolutely essential, if that is to be done, that there should be some form of second ballot in order to deal with what might be called frivolous candidatures. At all events, there is no check on any crank going to the poll, if the essential expenses are to be paid for him by the State. You might check that to a certain extent, by insisting on a deposit from every candidate, but returning that deposit where the man had polled a certain percentage, not of the voters on the register, but of the voters polling at that election. That might check frivolous candidatures, because the man who had not polled whatever percentage you choose to fix, would lose the deposit. But I think it would be a hardship in many cases. I think if you adopt, as I believe you ought to adopt, the payment of the official expenses, you should do it for everybody, with precautions against any man being returned on a minority of the votes polled.

2740. Would you suggest that every candidate should be required to have a much larger number of nominations than at present? Would that stop bogus candidates?—No, I do not think so.

2741. Supposing he had to have nomination by 100 qualified electors?—I do not think nomination by 100 qualified electors would prevent a bogus candidature. In a constituency of 12,000 voters, a man who could get 100, but perhaps no more, votes in the contest, is almost a frivolous candidate. But to impose on every candidate the nuisance and the trouble of getting a very large number of nominations, I do not think is desirable. I think the system by which nominations are used as a sort of flag now, is very ridiculous—the way in which 30 or 40 nomination papers are put in by men who could be quite satisfactorily nominated by two.

2742. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You speak of some form of second ballot being a necessary condition of the payment of public money for election expenses?—Yes.

2743. Would you include under that the alternative vote?—Yes; I only use the words "second ballot" to cover the two. I speak of the second ballot where I mean there has to be another election on a different day. I think is very desirable, and I do not know whether that is a matter one can go into—that you should further curtail candidates' expenses outside the official expenses.

2744. (*Chairman.*) That is on the border line of our reference I think?—Then as to strengthening the Corrupt Practices Act, you mentioned nursing con-

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stituencies. I do not know whether you consider "nursing" a constituency within your reference.

2745. No, I do not think that it does come within our reference?—The extension of the hours of polling is part of the machinery of elections.

2746. Would you be prepared to alter the existing hours?—I think it is very desirable that there should be some alteration; but the great difficulty is that a single alteration for the whole country will not suit various districts.

2747. Is there any reason why it should be uniform?—No, I do not think there is. The only difficulty is to put it in the hands of some body or of some individual to decide in each case what the hours are to be, of whose impartiality both candidates on both sides will be convinced.

2748. Surely the hours are not uniform now. Do not the Orkneys and Shetlands have their poll extending over three days?—Yes, that is on the ground of the peculiarity of the Islands and the difficulty of inter-communication; but otherwise it is uniform throughout the country.

2749. With the exception of the Universities?—Yes, with that exception. I am not quite sure whether Ross-shire, which includes the Islands, has more than one day to poll.

2750. (*Lord Loches.*) I think not?—I think it is only in the Orkney and Shetland Islands that the time is different.

2751. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You would give a carefully guarded power to make the hours more elastic?—Yes. When you talk of the extension of the hours of the poll I do not by any means think that the extension at one end is necessarily the best, that it should be extended from 8 in the evening to 10. I think in many places that would be a distinct disadvantage. You would get more drunkenness unless you closed the public-houses, which is another point I would like to speak upon. I suggest you should open the poll earlier in many places. In London I believe the greatest convenience to the people would be if you opened the poll from 7 in the morning till 9 in the evening. There is also the point worth considering whether you might not close the polling booths for two or even three hours in the early afternoon, which is a very slack time in polling unless your poll is on a Saturday when the afternoon hours are the busiest, and your evening hours in many cases the slackest.

2752. (*Lord Loches.*) Is that so in the country districts?—I was thinking more of the towns. That only shows the great difficulty of fixing hours to suit all communities.

2753. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Would it be feasible to entrust the power of fixing the hours to the Speaker—the hours to be named in the writ?—Speakers do not like taking responsibilities. Of course it would be possible. It would need a great deal of inquiry.

2754. You want an impartial person?—On that ground it would be admirable, but you would be compelling the Speaker to make very elaborate inquiries in very distant places as to what were the conveniences in a particular district, and, remember, he would not get a unanimous view. Some parties would wish to have the poll as large as possible, and others wish to have the poll as small as possible. You would not get unanimous representation from any constituency possibly as to what was really the most convenient time.

2755. (*Chairman.*) Would you be prepared to establish an officer who would have the control of all electoral matters? For instance, under the Federal Government of Australia they have what is called a Chief Electoral Officer who decides all moot points?—Yes, a district electoral officer. I should be quite prepared for that, and if you had such an electoral officer who commended himself to the country as a whole he would be a very good person to decide such points.

2756. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) Would you prefer one officer or a permanent electoral commission of, say, three men, to deal with electoral matters?—I should not mind which it was.

2757. (*Chairman.*) Are you prepared to support all elections being held on the same day?—Yes; I think it would be a great advantage, not the least from the view of decreasing the plural vote, because I think it would have very little effect on that, but I think getting rid of the very long turmoil and disturbance it undoubtedly is to trade and other occupations would be a great advantage to the country as a whole. So far as people dislike the swing of the pendulum, it would no doubt get rid of any swing which is produced during an election by the results at other places. It would not get rid of the swing of the pendulum of opinion in the Parliament just dissolved, but it would get rid of the effects supposed to be due to the publication of the results, say, at Manchester and Salford on the first night of the poll at the last election. I do not think it would affect plural voting to any extent at all. I know the case of a friend of mine who has a vote in Hampshire, two votes in London, three votes in Oxfordshire, and one vote in Berkshire, and he would not have the slightest difficulty, if he slept overnight in Hampshire, in exercising all those votes on the same day by using the ordinary trains and travelling with great ease and comfort. All elections on the same day are not in the least a cure for the disadvantages which I see in plural voting.

2758. Do you anticipate much difficulty from police questions and arrangements as to staff?—I do not think so. Electoral disturbances have become so much more rare now than they were in the old days. Elections are very peaceable things now. I believe the police would be very well able to deal with everything found necessary. The staff could easily be supplied. There would be a little increased expense at first by the increased provision for ballot boxes and partitions to be put up in polling-booths, and so on. I do not know that the cost would be greater to the candidate, because in most parts of the country now the candidate at every election pays for the ballot-boxes and the partitions as if they were new, at the price of new ones, though when examined they might have been in use since the Ballot Act of 1871.

2759. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Would you increase the number of polling booths?—I should like to increase the number very much, though that, of course, increases the cost to the candidate a little; but I think that in some districts polling-booths are too far distant from the voter, and the increase of polling-booths would enable you to get rid of the very undesirable conveyance of voters to the poll that at present takes place.

2760. Would you like to see this polling day made a public holiday?—Yes, I think so. If it is made a public holiday it gets rid of many questions as to which is the most suitable day in particular constituencies and particular trades for holding the poll.

2761. Would you like to see the appointment of official registration officers?—Yes, I think on the whole it would be more satisfactory—a registration officer whose duty it was really to make a careful canvass of his district to find out who was there, who had left, and who had arrived. Of course I would shorten the qualifying period for the vote.

2762. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) That touches the franchise. We have to consider how far these schemes are capable of application with regard to the existing electorate?—But I would apply that to the existing electorate, because the shortening of the qualification period in my mind is important to a man who is one of the existing electorate but who moves into another electoral district. That is how I bring it in. I think it is very important that a man when he moves should not, as at present, possibly lose his vote for over two years. But undoubtedly you must have a sufficient qualifying period in the new constituency or you might have wealth applied to the rapid transference of voters from a place where they might not be required to another place where they were much required to secure the return of a particular candidate. Therefore I do not think you could make the qualifying period less than three months. But you might very well have a system by which a man leaving Cheshire for Oxfordshire would take a card or certificate from the

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registration officer of Cheshire with him to Oxfordshire, so that after he had been resident in Oxfordshire for three months he might automatically go on the register, and then, and not till then, would he lose his vote in Cheshire. You might then have a voter on the register for a short time who had not been subject to objection before a Revising Barrister; but I think that is a less objection than keeping him off altogether, and he would come up for objection before the Revising Barrister at the next Revision Court, which I should be prepared to see, if necessary, half-yearly, instead of only annually.

2763. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) A similar provision was put in the Transvaal and Orange River Constitutions, and it works all right?—Yes.

2764. (*Chairman.*) I do not think plural voting really comes before us?—It applies very largely to the existing electorate.

2765. The existing electorate recognises the fact of plural voting?—If you think it outside your reference I will say nothing about it.

2766. I think the question of closing public-houses on the day of the poll does come within our reference?—Yes; that is the machinery of the present electorate. I think that is very desirable. It has been accepted in principle by both parties; or perhaps I should say it has been accepted certainly by the party I belong to, and certainly by Mr. Balfour. I do not know whether in his capacity of Leader of the Opposition or in his personal capacity. We have had the closing of public-houses in actual operation for many years in Monmouthshire.

2767. Under what Act?—Under the Act by which magistrates are able to close public-houses anywhere now on polling-day if they anticipate riot or danger to the public. For the purpose of closing public-houses the magistrates in Monmouthshire have anticipated riot at every general election for many years. Whether it has been *post hoc* or *propter hoc*, I do not know, but there never is a riot, and the public-houses are always closed with the greatest possible success. I speak of it with knowledge because my father sat for West Monmouthshire for some time, and I have seen it in operation. If magistrates in other parts of the country would acquire an anticipation of riot they might use the same process without alteration of the law. I think it would be more satisfactory if the law was altered and the public-houses were closed, at all events, during the hours of polling. There is some dispute as to whether they should be opened after the poll has closed. I think they must be.

2768. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) It is conceivable that closing them might conduce to riot in some cases?—Riot because they were closed? But people get accustomed to these things. I do not think they would riot the first time, and they would forget to the second time, I am sure.

2769. (*Chairman.*) I do not think the question of redistribution comes within the scope of our inquiry. Of course, all these schemes which have been suggested practically involve redistribution?—Certainly.

2770. But redistribution, as such, I do not think really comes before us?—No.

2771. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) You stand so strongly for single-member constituencies that I gather you object to proportional representation, as such?—Yes.

2772. And not in particular relation to what we call Lord Courtney's scheme?—No; I object to it as such. Lord Courtney's scheme does not diminish my objection to proportional representation as such.

2773. Your objection to proportional representation is an objection in principle?—In principle.

2774. So far as the scheme goes, perhaps you agree that where there is a demand for proportional representation, it will probably be found to be a good and workable scheme?—I think there will always be a demand for it by a small minority, who think they may acquire by that scheme a representation to which I do not think they are entitled under any scheme.

2775. I had in my mind, in the first instance, South Africa. You will have observed that in the original resolutions passed by the South African Convention,

there was one in favour of proportional representation. I call that an assumption—or adopt that as an assumption—in favour of proportional representation in South Africa?—It is a little difficult for me to speak absolutely as a private member on the subject of minorities in South Africa.

2776. I only wanted to know from you whether you desired to condemn the scheme as a scheme, or merely to pass it by, because you object to proportional representation on principle?—I think we had better put it on that basis, that I object to proportional representation on principle, and therefore would condemn any scheme which led to it.

2777. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) All we have to consider is the application in this country of any such scheme, and perhaps we can guard ourselves by limiting ourselves to that?—Yes, in this country.

2778. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) As I understand it you would favour redistribution, based as nearly as possible on equal electoral districts, each returning one member?—Yes.

2779. You would abolish the two-member constituencies altogether?—Yes.

2780. And then provide in the single-member constituencies for the alternative vote?—Yes, with possible automatic redistribution in the future, but I am afraid that is beyond your reference.

2781. That is as far as you are prepared to go?—Yes.

2782. That statement contains all the reform and amendment *quâ* electoral system, which you desire to see introduced?—Yes.

2783. Do you happen to know whether the same opinion is held by the electioneering people, the agents and so forth of the parties?—I have no right to speak for them, but I have been associated with them for so many years that I do not think I should misrepresent those with whom I worked, if I said that I think, as a whole, they hold the same view as I do.

2784. (*Chairman.*) But they are rather prejudiced. It means an alteration of their whole line of business?—No, I think they have arrived at that view from the experience which they have had in electoral work. I do not find them prejudiced against schemes of reform.

2785. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) We have had two or three of them before us, and they certainly opposed any system of proportional representation?—That confirms my view, but of course I have no right to speak for them.

2786. But I could not follow from the evidence whether they were afraid that the party system would be weakened by the introduction of proportional representation, or whether they felt that proportional representation would only introduce such a comparatively small number of independent members as to make it useless to touch the system?—I should have thought their view was that proportional representation was cumbersome and difficult, that it might be damaging to our present party system, and probably would be; and that it would introduce into the House of Commons people who have no special right to be there, and who would be of no special value when they got there.

2787. We have had two lines of evidence before us. One class of witness has said that the party wire-pullers would be as strong as ever under a system of proportional representation; they will hold the field; they will make the constituencies vote as per list, and therefore it is useless to introduce proportional representation, and the thing will be as it is now. Then we have had the other line of thought which has put it diametrically opposite, that there will be no stability in Government, because the House of Commons will be filled with independent members owing allegiance to no party?—The latter result I think very undesirable. If the first result is to take place, it is unnecessary to upset our system to produce no alteration.

2788. You are inclined to think that the second result would follow from the introduction of proportional representation?—I should think it possible, but whichever result follows, obviously, I should be equally opposed—(1) because you obtain no result except that of general disturbance; and (2) if you obtain any result at all, you will obtain a result which, I think, will be a bad one.

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2789. You are conscious that, as a matter of fact, a witness must give evidence on theory and not on fact in dealing with such a subject?—Quite.

2790. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You do not believe that the unstable personnel of Parliament is due in any way to the fact that, at any given election, the majority on one side or the other is larger than the side is entitled to?—Of course that must affect the personnel to a certain extent, by which I mean that certain people who have been in the House previously, are rejected, where, under an elaborate and careful system they might have been able to retain their seats. But, on the whole, they suffer because the country is holding strong views, and in the general cataclysm they go under.

2791. If you were to adopt some system of limiting the abnormal majorities in Parliament you would at the same time limit their activities?—Very largely.

2792. Then would not you limit the necessary reaction against them?—No doubt if a Government does very little, there can be very little objection to it, except by those who wish it to do much.

2793. You think a Government is justified in doing more than it could do if its majority represented actually the feeling of the country by the fact that the succeeding Government, or the Government after that would equally magnify the majority the other way?—I think that is an abstract question of Government, more or less, which I should not like to go into. I am here only as a private member.

2794. When you suggested the increasing of the polling booths, in what exact way did you mean to suggest that they should be increased?—That there should be a booth provided for a smaller number of voters than now.

2795. Any side in any constituency can apply to the county council, I think, which determines the number of polling stations?—Yes, I do not think they have a right to demand it. They can ask for it.

2796. Would you give them a right to demand it?—I would give them a statutory right to ask for a polling booth for a comparatively small number of voters.

2797. Do you see any difficulty in making the same day for the election in both rural and urban constituencies?—I have faced the difficulty that you might have to have two days, one for boroughs, and one for counties. It would make the police question much easier, it would make the staff question rather easier, but it would get rid of some of the advantages of having the whole of the polls on one day. If you were to put the counties first, you would not have any pendulum effect produced by their poll, because their count would not be until the following day, when the elections for the boroughs were taking place; but if you put the boroughs first, and assume that they were all counted the same night, you would have a terrific pendulum effect upon your counties the next day, assuming the news of the result of the borough elections got to the voters in the counties.

2798. You do not think our electoral system should embody any recognition of the necessarily longer campaign in a rural, than in an urban, district?—Yes; I think it might well do that, but, at present, you have many county polls taking place before some of the borough polls are concluded.

2799. In dealing with the advantages of the personal connection between a member and his constituency, are you of opinion that the readiness to vote of an average elector depends largely upon the intimate connection between the member and himself. Do you anticipate smaller polls, as the result of diminishing that connection?—I do, certainly, because I think the acquaintance with a candidate or a member—an acquaintance which induces an elector to go to the poll, as apart from his political views—is the confidence he has acquired in what he regards as the honesty of the man he is going to vote for. I do not think he wants a mere machine—a delegate—who he thinks will carry out his general views. I think he is influenced by the character of the man whom he has seen, and come in contact with.

2800. Therefore, you think proportional representation would diminish interest in politics, rather than increase it?—Certainly.

2801. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) I do not understand, exactly, what were the precautions which you thought might be taken to prevent bogus candidatures, supposing all candidates' necessary expenses were paid?—There can be no precaution against a bogus candidature, but that is why I said you must have something in the nature of an alternative vote, or a second poll if you are going to enable any number of candidates to go to the poll without expense to themselves.

2802. But you do not approve of them making any deposit?—I do not think it would be necessary if you have provided the alternative vote, or a second poll. Undoubtedly, the deposit would discourage a certain number of bogus candidates, but it might be a hardship on perfectly genuine candidates, and yet let in a bogus man who had a few friends with more money than brains.

2803. You think, with a large constituency, the expenses of candidates will be very greatly increased. A good many witnesses who have appeared before the Commission have suggested that the conditions will be so entirely different that the system with regard to expenses would be different too. The candidates would not attempt the same expenditure of energy or of money as they do at present?—But I guarded myself by saying that I was assuming the elections are conducted on the present lines. I do not know what other lines might be possible if you have these gigantic constituencies.

2804. You think, in practice, the expenses would become greater?—I do. I think with the keenness of individuals to be returned, and of the parties to return their men, with the increasing work which within the last 25 years has been piled up on by-elections and general elections, you are not likely to have any change, and the increased cost and labour, therefore, would be gigantic.

2805. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) In regard to the question of preventing bogus candidates, I rather gather you thought it possible to fine a man who has been a frivolous candidate, by making him pay the returning officer's expenses, and not letting him off as you would the ordinary candidate?—That has been suggested, and I put it forward as one of the suggestions, not as my own, or thinking it very desirable, but as something of that sort being almost necessary, unless you provide a second poll or an alternative vote.

2806. I do not wish to make more of Colonial examples than they are worth, but the system of requiring deposits from candidates is the law in several Colonies?—Yes.

2807. It does not appear to be thought a hardship there?—No, but so far as it goes it becomes a test of wealth, and not of character.

2808. In the case of genuine labour candidates, their party puts down the deposit for them?—Then you are assuming that a genuine labour candidate must be run by a party.

2809. He is run by a certain number of friends?—He may be in fact, but you are limiting his possibility of standing to the fact that he should have a party to find the money for him.

2810. That he should have at any rate a certain number of friends who take his candidature seriously enough to deposit some money to help him if necessary. That is what is assumed there?—Yes.

2811. With regard to the increase of expenses in the case of large constituencies, does your memory go back to the days when there were three-member constituencies in England?—Yes.

2812. I think you stated that in the case of nine-member constituencies it would mean that a man's expenses might be nine times as much. In the case of those three-member constituencies, were the expenses three times as much as in a single-member constituency?—I think they were three times as much if you had a single individual standing and not an individual standing as one of a ticket of three.

2813. In the case of the two-member constituencies in England and Ireland the expenses are hardly double

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as much for each man as in a single-member constituency to-day?—If there were two Liberal candidates standing for a two-member constituency and standing as joint candidates, of course each individual's expenses are practically what they would be in a single-member constituency.

2814. I gather, too, that on the whole, though you do not pin yourself to expressing a view as to how proportional representation would affect the party system, you think it would be more likely to make the party system work elaborately and with complexity, but very effectually, rather than upset and break it up altogether?—I was quoting Sir Charles Dilke's view that proportional representation was incompatible with the English party system.

2815. But I rather gathered your own view, as far as you let us see it, was that it might have the other effect and make the party organisation more elaborate, more complex, and more carefully worked out?—I think it would make the organisation more elaborate; but whether the organisation through its elaboration would be successful or not, I cannot say.

2816. As far as examples outside this country go you are perhaps aware that it has that effect?—Yes, I have read that it has that effect. I have no personal experience of it.

2817. Putting South Africa aside altogether, there is one British community in which proportional representation has been fully tried; that is the Colony of Tasmania. It has recently had precisely that effect. Instead of encouraging the formation of groups it has turned a three-party system into a two-party system by obliging two of the three parties to coalesce, and become one solid party. That is the first effect there of proportional representation. Assuming that the party system—by which I assume you mean the two-party system—were to survive proportional representation, you would have, of course, a list system in large constituencies. You would have each party putting up its list of men?—Yes.

2818. Supposing that were successfully worked, that would, of course, get rid of a great many objections to proportional representation on the ground that it would fill the House with independent cranks and members?—If it produced a system which nullified the objects of proportional representation, it would from my point of view be less mischievous.

2819. That is to say, it would nullify the views of a gentleman like Lord Courtney, and others?—Yes.

2820. Not necessarily of all friends of proportional representation, but of those gentlemen?—No, I am taking him as a protagonist.

2821. Do you think a system of large constituencies could produce no good effect where party lists were put up by each party and carried more or less?—I have never been able to see any.

2822. You do not think you would get an abler class of candidate, for example?—No.

2823. You do not think they would be, if I may use the expression, more political candidates rather than local men who are elected for non-political reasons now for example?—A local man when he stands for Parliament becomes a political man.

2824. But is not he in single-member constituencies to-day very often elected for all sorts of reasons other than the fact that he is an able and thoughtful politician?—I think he is generally elected by the bulk of the people who vote for him on the ground that he will sufficiently and honestly represent their political views in Parliament.

2825. You mean that he will vote with his party?—That is your gloss on my answer.

2826. But is it not practically the case that a very large number of electors vote for a man primarily because he will vote for their party?—Because he will vote in support of their views, their views presumably being the views of the party to which they have attached themselves.

2827. Is it not the case that a very large proportion of Liberals and Conservatives vote for the party man because he is the party man simply?—Undoubtedly.

2828. But is it not also the case that in single-member constituencies the local position and wealth

and disposition and so forth of the candidate, tell very largely quite apart from any political ability he may show?—That is one of many influences, but that does not prevent our system being largely one of carpet baggers in the best sense of the term.

2829. Do not you think in a large constituency, say, Birmingham—or other large towns returning nine members—the party in Birmingham would, on their list, find it necessary to get, if they could, men of political knowledge, ability, eloquence, and energy and so forth?—I think both parties, and all parties, feel now the desire to obtain that exact type of man whenever they can find him.

2830. One is led rather to think that in many of the single-member constituencies members of a somewhat different type from that are successful because of local influence or command of money?—That may be so, but also because of local confidence in their character.

2831. I think you suggested that you did not see any very great evils, or quite the contrary, in the fact that the personnel of Parliament is really much more unstable than public opinion in the country under the present system?—I do not think I said "much more." I admitted that the swing of the pendulum of public opinion may at times give you, and may generally in fact give you rather a larger majority in the House of Commons than the successful party is entitled to by the votes which it may have polled in the aggregate outside. That, I think, is an advantage.

2832. Does not that really work out at this, that the personnel of Parliament, under the present system, is really much more unstable, and that the instability is exaggerated as compared with the instability of public opinion?—I think you might put it that way.

2833. The constituencies do not swing nearly as far backwards and forwards as the personnel of Parliament responds to that swing?—I think that is probably true.

2834. I understood you, in referring to that swing in the constituencies, to say that proportional representation, if it brought about the effect aimed at by Lord Courtney, Mr. Parker Smith, and Lord Balfour of Burleigh, would tend to government by wobblers?—Yes.

2835. But in the constituencies, is it not the case that, under the single-member system the constituencies have largely now their wishes dominated by a section of wobblers, the men who swing backwards and forwards with each swing of the pendulum?—We generally call them the balancing electors.

2836. And these balancing electors or wobbling electors practically, to a large extent, govern in the constituencies; they dominate the constituencies now?—They produce a considerable effect.

2837. A very experienced witness told us the other day that the whole cost, turmoil, and fighting in our electoral system is really devoted to trying to capture the small handful of men in each constituency who swing backwards and forwards with the swing of the pendulum! Should you consider that an exaggerated statement?—I think it is rather an exaggeration, because at the last election, I should say the proportion of balancing electors was very great on the question which was uppermost in the minds of the electorate at that time, and you were capturing not a small minority of the electorate, but a majority of people whose party ties had become very much loosened by a great question.

2838. But the figures of the Liberal vote in 1906 as compared with the vote in 1900 and the Unionist vote also allowing for Labour votes, do not seem to indicate that a majority of the electors changed their minds, or anything like a majority?—It is very difficult to estimate what is the opinion of the majority—I mean what was the change in opinion of the majority. There were undoubtedly two elections in which opinions changed perhaps more than at most.

2839. Do you consider that a single great question like Tariff Reform—to use the cant phrase for it—probably caused great change of mind in the case of many electors?—Yes, I think so.

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2840. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) We have been much pressed with the argument that under a new system a better class of member would be sent to the House. I gather you would not agree with that?—No.

2841. But there is the further point which has been put to us that if majorities are smaller in the House—and I think they would be—and you had a body of independent opinion, or some independent opinion, it would tend to good government. Is that your opinion or not?—No, I think my feeling would be that it would tend to no government.

2842. (*Lord Loches.*) I understand you do not express any choice or preference as between the various schemes which have been submitted to us for securing a more representative character to the House of Commons—Lord Courtney's, the Belgian scheme, and the others?—No.

2843. You dislike the object and purpose of all of them?—Yes.

2844. May I take it further that you think, with the exception of the facilities for voting and things of that sort which you think might be improved, the present House of Commons is fully representative?—I think there are many improvements which might be made in our electoral machinery, some which I have not been able to go into, because they are outside your reference.

2845. Longer hours of polling, payment of expenses, and things of that sort?—And changes in the franchise—limitations of plural voting, and other things of that kind.

2846. With the exception of those matters, you

The witness withdrew.

Mr. HUGH RUSCOMBE POOLE called in and examined.

2852. (*Chairman.*) You are Under-Sheriff for Somersetshire?—Yes.

2853. That position you have occupied for a good number of years?—Yes.

2854. As such you have had the control and conduct of numerous elections?—I have conducted every election since 1879.

2855. I may say your experience is very considerable as to the actual administration of all electoral machinery?—Yes, all the details have passed through my hands.

2856. Have you gone into the questions which have come up before us with regard to the proposed changes in the electoral system?—I have read these pamphlets which the Secretary has been good enough to send me, and written out a few notes.

2857. I think it will be convenient if you will take them in order. The first one is the practical side of the question of proportional representation. Will you give us your views on that question?—I think the feasibility of dealing with the votes of a five or seven member constituency is demonstrated by the model election of the Proportional Representation Society. I think it would take a much longer time to deal with 21,672 ballot papers in an actual Parliamentary election than six hours, the time occupied in the model election. I say this for two reasons; first, because the Parliamentary Elections Act, 1875, first schedule, does not admit of the employment of anything like so large a number of persons to count the ballot papers and the votes as 40, which was the number employed in the model election—indeed, they had rather more than 40. 21,672 ballot papers would be produced from a constituency of, say, 28,000 electors on the register, and the number of persons the returning officer is authorised to employ to assist him in counting the votes for payment is, on the above assumption, only 18. Secondly, in the model election there were no ballot boxes to deal with. I think the verification of the ballot boxes—that is, the counting of the ballot papers in each box separately—and the checking of the ballot paper counts, would take from two to four hours according to the number of persons engaged in counting, and this is an absolutely necessary operation to be completed before the counting of the votes begins. With regard, first, to the number of persons

think the present parliamentary system may be regarded as fully representative?—Yes.

2847. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) You object to making experiments in large boroughs. May we understand you to mean by that not that you object to a different electoral system in the large boroughs, but you object to making an innovation of this kind in the large boroughs. You see no difficulty, in principle, in having a different system in one part of the country than in another?—I should, indeed.

2848. Any different system?—I should see great difficulty in having a different system for county and borough representation.

2849. We do now have a slight difference by having two-member constituencies in some places?—That is very true.

2850. But you would like to abolish that system, and you object to any other kind of difference?—Yes.

2851. (*Mr. Pember Reeves.*) With reference to the possible effect of proportional representation in diminishing the majority in the House of Commons, one or two witnesses who have had experience of the House of Commons, commit themselves to the statement that they do not think it would be much more difficult to govern in the House with a majority of from 30 to 40 as with a majority like the present. Does your experience lead you to differ from that?—I was very intimately acquainted with the Government of 1892 to 1895, which started with a majority of 40, which ultimately carried its Finance Bill with a majority of 13 and the Speaker with a majority of 11, and from my recollection, which is a very lively one, I am not anxious to recur to that situation.

employed by the returning officer to assist him to count the votes, I presume this objection is one which could be remedied by an amendment of the Act of 1875 and its schedule; but if that is done it must be borne in mind that there will be so much more expense incurred. There are two ways of looking at this. If 18 counters only are employed, it is quite possible the ballot papers may not be completely dealt with in one day, in which case the 18 counters would have to attend the second day, for which service they would have to be paid. On the other hand, if 36 counters are employed the work would be carried out in one day at the same expense. There would be no difficulty in obtaining the services of 36 counters, because the presiding officers, on delivering up their ballot boxes, will be glad enough to stay and earn an additional fee for assisting the returning officer to count the votes. Another point, as regards the persons employed to count is this: Whereas under the existing system the counting of the votes in a constituency of 10,000 to 12,000 voters takes, roughly speaking, from three to four hours; under the new system the count would certainly take all day, and it cannot be expected that the official counters shall perform this service without adequate remuneration. The present fee is one guinea. There is another point with regard to counting the votes. Candidates may appoint agents to attend the counting of the votes, and under the present system it is usual for the candidate to appoint exactly the same number of agents as the number of official counters appointed by the returning officer. I think under the proportional representation system each candidate should appoint one agent only, because the ballot papers of the candidate he represents would be counted at a separate table, or at a reserved place up on one large table set apart for that particular candidate, and one agent would suffice to check the work of the one official counter at that table. I see, however, some difficulty about this, because it might happen, as it did in the model election, that one candidate would receive several thousand first preference votes more than any other candidate, and consequently it would cause great loss of time to leave one official counter only with one candidate's agent to count perhaps 9,000 ballot papers. The returning officer would easily get over his part of the difficulty,

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by passing on the official counters who had finished the ballot papers of the other candidates to assist the official who would be dealing with the 9,000 votes. In that case the candidate with the 9,000 votes would have no agent to check the official counters who had come to the assistance of the first official counter. I do not just now quite see the way over this difficulty, but doubtless it is not insuperable. Perhaps the way over it would be to allow, as now, each candidate to appoint a reasonable number of agents, but give the returning officer control over them to prevent confusion, and direct them to stand aside until their services are required. I think the returning officer's duties should be lightened as far as possible by giving clear directions as to what is a spoiled ballot paper; and in regard to this I am of opinion that the elector who wishes to make a declaration of inability to read ought to be abolished. If this is not done it will be found under the proportional representation system that numbers of electors will say they cannot read in order to save themselves the trouble of making themselves masters of the new system. Every time an illiterate requests to have his vote marked by the presiding officer the polling station has to be cleared, the doors shut, and so much time wasted. Under the new system the time wasted would be much more than it is now, because the illiterate voter will require to have the whole thing explained to him unless he is willing to abandon all thought or intention of marking the ballot paper with a second or third preference. I am not quite sure that I should not feel inclined to deal harshly, too, with the voter who inadvertently spoiled his ballot paper and asked to be supplied with another. In rural districts there are still many people who are very unintelligent in regard to marking ballot papers, though the number of spoiled papers has become quite inconsiderable. Many of the rules in the schedule to the Ballot Act would have to be somewhat modified to meet the provisions of the proportional representation scheme; but these are mere matters of detail which would present no serious difficulty when the time comes to draft a Bill. Now as regards the arrangements which would be required for dealing with a large rural constituency, generally speaking the Ballot Act would still be the guide to all the operations. The returning officer would have much difficulty in delivering the ballot boxes to the presiding officers, as is the practice now, on the day immediately preceding the poll. A large constituency means long distances, and I think the time between the adjournment of the election after the nomination papers have been handed in and the day fixed for the poll must—I had written first of all "may be very well extended," but I must alter that and say *must* be extended. This is quite imperative. The work of preparation, especially the polling arrangement and advertisements, for the poll in a constituency of 10,000 electors is very considerable and if under the new system the constituencies, that is rural constituencies, are to be of 30,000 or more electors, the returning officer must either largely increase his staff or must have more time. It costs nothing to give more time, but an increased staff means largely increased expense.

2858. (*Chairman.*) Your conclusion is that if alterations were made with regard to illiterate voters, and also the mischievous man who spoils his paper and wants another one, you do not think it would be an impracticable scheme as far as the actual marking of the paper is concerned?—No, I think it would be difficult at first, but there is nothing but what we should get over in time.

2859. There would be no insuperable difficulty?—No, I do not think there would be.

2860. The difficulty would really commence when the actual counting began?—Yes, that would be the principal difficulty, but the difficulty of getting the polling arrangements ready is really very serious. The notices as to where people are to poll and how the polling stations are to be arranged, and what voters are to poll at what stations, are the things which would take time, but still we can do it. We can do it now, and could do it then, but there would be much more to do.

2861. Would you be quite sure of having always at your hand a staff capable of dealing with this rather complicated system?—No, I should have to increase my staff.

2862. But do you think the material in any district would be forthcoming?—Yes.

2863. Bank clerks, council officers, and people like that could be got hold of somehow?—I think so.

2864. What would be the total number of staff required? Take your own county, for instance, if it were one electoral area. You return seven members now?—Yes.

2865. Supposing that county was one large electoral division returning seven members, would the total number of staff required be more?—Yes.

2866. I suppose the same staff does the different elections: you go about the county?—Yes, I do as far as possible. I have been at it so many years now that I know where to put my hand upon men in different parts of the county who know the work thoroughly and are willing to help me; so I go beyond the actual staff of my own office very often and borrow men very often. When a general election is coming on I ask two or three men who have perhaps been in my office as young fellows, and who have passed on into the outer world, to come back for a time. I help myself in that way.

2867. The same men take part in two or three different elections?—Yes.

2868. Under this proposed scheme certain mathematical calculations have to be made?—In counting the votes, yes.

2869. Would that present any difficulties?—It would be difficult at first, but if they could get over it in that model election I take it we could get over it.

2870. You would have the same class of man in almost every part of the country as they had at Caxton Hall?—What I suggest is that the presiding officers who bring in the ballot boxes should be retained to help me to count the votes. In the model election they had persons who are accustomed to sort papers at the Post Office, and so on. I could have a certain number of bank clerks, and people like that. Lately the banks have rather objected to their clerks coming and rendering any help at all; but I have never had any serious difficulty in counting votes, and I think the class of men I now get I should still get, and they would be equal to the occasion.

2871. You say expenses would undoubtedly be increased?—Yes. I do not think it would be possible to count votes under this proposed system of proportional representation in less than a whole day.

2872. Would there be any objection to the counting extending over one or two or even three days?—No, I do not know that there would, except the expense.

2873. It would cause no inconvenience to the public. You would not anticipate riots, or anything of that sort?—No, I do not think that.

2874. In calculating expenses you bear in mind that you have to compare it, not with the one election but with the total number of elections—seven. You have to compare the total cost on your one count under the proportional representation scheme with the total cost of seven separate constituencies?—Yes. I do not know that the increased expense, if allowed on that basis, would be very great. If it is all one constituency we should have a constituency of 70,000 or 80,000 voters, so that we could not count with 40 counters. But there is this difficulty: a constituency of that sort would take a very large room and we may not have a room available. In our Shire Hall we have always counted the votes in the grand jury room, but it would not be big enough for this scheme.

2875. But in almost every place there would be some public hall available surely?—There would be a town hall. I was only looking at what this model election showed. There would be one very large table and then a separate table for every candidate. I do not suppose that is a real difficulty; but if we could not count them as now in the grand jury room, perhaps we could count them in the big hall on the ground floor and keep everybody else out.

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2876. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) In the Belgian system they have local counting in the first place and the results of the different districts are brought up to a central hall?—You mean we could count each separate ballot box.

2877. I do not know whether you have seen the evidence about the Belgian system?—No.

2878. There was a description of an election at Brussels, and I rather gathered that the counting there was done in the first instance in the different districts and the results were brought up to the central place to be compared?—That would be possible.

2879. (*Chairman.*) Of course you would have to have other officers responsible to you?—Yes.

2880. Do you think that it would be possible to do this in a large district like Somersetshire, taking that as being typical of a large rural area?—I think it has something like 10,000 to 12,000 electors in each of the seven districts—that is, 84,000 in all—and the distances are very great. I do not think we could get the ballot boxes in on the same day, and it would take half the next day to get them in.

2881. Have you considered what the effect of a by-election in a division like Somersetshire would be? Would it involve practically as big an undertaking, as far as expense is concerned, as a general election?—Exactly the same if it is all one constituency. There would be no difference.

2882. You would have to have exactly the same machinery if either 2 or 14 candidates were standing?—Yes, exactly the same. You mean under the present system or under the new system. If you have seven members there must be more than two candidates.

2883. But not in a by-election?—I think everything would be done exactly the same except that the expense of counting the votes would not be so great; you would not want so many counters.

2884. In your experience have you come across any section of the community who desire a change of this sort?—No, I have not.

2885. I suppose in your capacity you are rather outside the ordinary party channels?—Entirely outside.

2886. You do not happen to have come across any body of persons who desire this change?—No, I have not heard it talked about. I do not think it has been talked about much in the county.

2887. This proposal practically brings forward the question of all elections being held on one day. Do you see any objection to that?—I think it could be done, but I would very much rather it was not done because of my own personal arrangements and convenience.

2888. You would have to alter them considerably?—I should have to have such a large number of deputies to be responsible to me.

2889. Then there is the question of the police?—That is one difficulty. It is a question even now which gives me great difficulty in fixing the day of the poll. I have always to consult the chief constable. He says, "Mr. Poole, if you have North Somerset on the same day as West Somerset, I cannot arrange for the police to be in their proper places and give you a sufficient number of police," and so on. I only give that as an illustration. It may not be North or West Somerset, but he says, "If you have two polls on one day they should be two divisions which are pretty close together." But if you have all the elections in the county on one day I do not know how he is to make any but the ordinary arrangements. Some parts of the county would have to be denuded of their police altogether if other parts are to have an additional number. I think the Chief Constable would make great objection if anything out of the ordinary course is expected of him.

2890. It would be impossible to borrow police from neighbouring counties because they would be in the same position themselves?—They would be in the same difficulty.

2891. Quite apart from this question of proportional representation involving this large counting, are there any other suggestions of a practical nature in the conduct of elections which you would like to recommend?—It has been suggested that all electoral

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matters should be put into the hands of an Electoral Commission, or, as in Australia, under what they call a Chief Electoral Officer. Would you recommend the constitution of such a body or person?—I do not think it would be a bad plan; but it does not affect us very much. All our elections have always gone through without any hitch, and we have not had to refer anything to anybody.

2892. You, as a returning officer, have to decide many questions as to the validity of ballot papers, and so on?—Yes.

2893. Occasionally questions come up almost impossible to answer without reference to the Act of Parliament dealing with the question?—Yes. There are cases with regard to individual ballot papers being marked in a peculiar way. The case of *Woodward v. Sarsons* decides most of them. Although we have a good deal of discussion occasionally at the returning officer's table, we are not very often more than five or ten minutes over any individual paper, and I have never, or hardly ever, known a case where they have required the returning officer to endorse the ballot paper with his decision "rejection objected to."

2894. You do not think the difficulties arising under the present system render necessary the appointment of expert officers all over the country?—No, I do not. I think the under sheriff is quite capable of dealing with all those things in the counting hall.

2895. In your experience there would be no difficulty?—No difficulty at all.

2896. As to the payment of expenses, would it be feasible for the county area to pay for the compulsory expenses of candidates—the actual returning officer's expenses?—As a public charge on the rates it could be done, I suppose.

2897. Would it in your opinion cause the appearance of many bogus candidates who would not be put to any loss?—I think it might.

2898. As to the actual expenses, would it be possible to reduce them materially?—No, I do not think it would.

2899. I suppose, as a matter of fact, those expenses bear a very small proportion to the total expenses of the candidate?—Very small.

2900. Would you suggest that the polling day should be declared a public holiday in the constituency?—I do not see the necessity for it. You would have everybody out in the streets, even more than now.

2901. Do you think an extension of polling hours necessary?—Quite unnecessary in a constituency like ours.

2902. A suggestion has been made that the poll might open earlier and close later, but it should be closed in the middle of the day when voting is very slack?—I think that is quite unnecessary in a rural constituency. It is a very long sitting as it is, for one man and his clerk to sit for 12 hours. It involves getting up very early in the morning and getting to the polling station as best he can, and going away late at night; and if he has to get there earlier and stop later, the mere stoppage in the middle of the day would not make any difference; he would not know where to go, because he is away from his own district. I do not know whether it would not in that case be necessary to have two presiding officers, one to take the first half of the day, and the other the second half.

2903. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It has been suggested that the extension of the hours of polling is an urban question and not a rural question?—Yes, I think it must be.

2904. What is your election staff? What are the persons whom you have to employ for the purposes of the election?—Presiding officers and polling clerks.

2905. Is that the whole staff?—That is the whole at the moment on the day of election.

2906. You would have to appoint so many presiding officers and so many polling clerks?—Yes, here and there I would appoint two polling clerks if it is a large polling station.

2907. Referring to this proportional representation scheme, I gather that in your opinion the scheme could be worked?—I think it could. I will not say anything about boroughs or very large constituencies. In my

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county we have 10,000 to 12,000 electors in each division. In other counties there may be more. The Under Sheriff of Middlesex tells me he has one division with between 30,000 and 40,000 electors, 33,000 I think—the Harrow Division he mentioned. I am only speaking for myself, and, from what I know of Somersetshire, I think it could be done in Somersetshire.

2908. But it would probably involve additional expense?—Yes, I think so.

2909. Expense due to two causes; first, that the system would be rather more complicated?—Yes.

2910. And, secondly, that the area would be greater; and you think the increase of the size of the constituency would increase the expense?—I do not think that the increased expense would be very great except as regards the travelling expenses of presiding officers and poll clerks, the official notices of polling arrangements, and the cost of printing the ballot papers. I think the increased expense of counting probably would be very great; but then, as the Chairman says, if you come to compare it with the counting of seven separate divisions I am not sure that it would be greater.

2911. You do not think you would have any difficulty in obtaining the staff required?—I think I could get over the difficulty. I might have a little difficulty at first. I do not see anything in it at present but what we could get over. I want to press as far as I can the fact that we must have more time between the nomination day and the poll. Getting out the advertisements of how electors are to go to the poll is a very difficult process indeed. It is one which causes me more trouble than anything else. It is one that the election agents are continually asking questions about, and urging me to get out these notices as quickly as I possibly can. As soon as they know when the poll is, they say: "Do let us have these notices of how men are to poll and where." That is the most difficult notice I have to get out, and we must have more time for that if we are to have these large constituencies. Again, under the present system one knows a fortnight, three weeks, or a month before exactly who the candidates are going to be. I write to the election agent and say: "Would you be good enough to give the full name and address of your candidate exactly as you intend it to appear in your nomination papers, so that I may get out in type the ballot papers before hand, and when the nomination day comes I can telegraph to the printer, 'Prepare and print the ballot papers immediately';" but under the proportional representation system I should not know until the nomination papers are laid upon the table who the candidates are.

2912-3. The enlargement of the constituencies you think would involve an increase of time between the nomination day and the polling day?—Yes, or else I think we might get into great difficulties. It would never do for us to be behindhand with our polling arrangements and advertising.

2914. You think the application of the proportional representation system would probably involve increase of time, there being two considerations—the enlargement of the constituencies and the further complications in the voting arrangements?—Yes, the complications in the voting arrangements would be dealt with the same as they are now, but they would be more elaborate I suppose. I must have more time for getting them out; but as far as regards the place where the voters are to go to poll, they will go then as now. Although there may be a redistribution as regards members of Parliament there will be no redistribution, I take it, as regards polling stations and polling places; so that where a man polls now he will poll then. But this notice I speak of contains not only these directions as to where people are to go to vote, but also contains a copy of the ballot paper and the list of candidates nominated; so I have to wait until I have all the nomination papers in before I can instruct the printers; whereas now I can instruct the printer and do everything beforehand and get the whole thing ready beforehand.

2915. Therefore, the more complicated the nomination paper, is the longer the time involved?—Yes.

2916. As to having all elections on one day, supposing they were all held on one day, could you, so far as your staff is concerned, work the elections in Somersetshire?—I think I could.

2917. You could find a staff somehow?—Yes, I think so.

2918. But the principal difficulty would be the police difficulty?—I think we should have to do without police to a great extent. As a rule in most of our quiet rural villages there is no need of a policeman. He helps, and is very helpful, and no doubt he is very civil, and all that, and somebody or other must stand at the door; but it might be possible to ask the presiding officer to find some suitable person who would be doorkeeper. You must have a doorkeeper, and they pay more respect to a policeman, perhaps, than to a person in plain clothes. If I had to hire a person to do that I should have to pay him, whereas I do not know who pays the policeman, or whether he gets any extra pay at all. At any rate, the county provide the police, and I never pay them.

2919. Would you say there is less need of the police for the purpose of maintaining order than was the case 40 or 50 years ago?—I do not think there is any need at all, except in manufacturing towns here and there—biggish towns. There are two or three places in our county which it would be folly to denude of police.

2920. But taking the county as a whole, there is no special extra need of police on polling day?—Not in country villages, but in the towns, I think, you must have them. If you do not have police you must have somebody in plain clothes, and if he is to be an officer of the returning officer we should have to pay him for being there.

2921. That would mean additional expense?—Yes.

2922. (Mr. Edwin Montagu.) Apart from the question of having elections all on one day under the present system, you would have to poll the whole of Somersetshire on one day if you had proportional representation?—Yes.

2923. How long do you think it would take, in your opinion, after the polling day for the counting of the votes? Did you say four days or one day?—From the polling day to the counting of the votes?

2924. The declaration of the result?—I did not say four days. I said I could not get in all the ballot boxes on the same evening. It would take probably half the next day to get in all the ballot boxes. We could begin counting at 10 o'clock on the next day after the poll, provided we began with just such ballot boxes as had already been delivered, which would be a considerable number, and others would be coming in all day long more or less. I think the counting of the ballot boxes—that is to say, the checking of the number of votes in the box, not the counting of the votes—probably would take till perhaps 2 or 3 o'clock, so that we could not begin counting the votes for each candidate before that. Therefore, I do not think we could, in a whole county with seven members, do it in one day, but probably we could do it in two. You cannot tell until you have experimented upon it.

2925. Do you think, as a rough guess, you could staff any proportional representation election in Somerset, or would you have to go outside the county boundaries to get some of your staff?—I could do it in Somersetshire.

2926. Have you ever had any experience of any difficulty in increasing the number of polling stations in your county. If a new polling station is wanted, I think the system is that a petition is sent to the county council?—Yes.

2927. Does that system, so far as you know, work satisfactorily?—The polling stations are altered from time to time. Representations are made to the county council every now and then, and alterations are made. An order is sent out from the county council and I get the necessary information.

2928. Have you heard any suggestion as to the alteration of that system, or would it not come your way?—I have not heard any objection to this system. I should think it is as good a system as you could have.

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2929. Have you heard of any difficulty with regard to the hours of polling in your district?—None at all. I do not know that it altogether concerns this Commission, but there is one remark I should like to make. Presiding officers are not enabled to vote, because they are allotted to polling stations where they do not happen to have their names upon the register. I think presiding officers ought to be enabled to poll, just the same as police constables, at the polling station where they happen to be posted.

2930. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It is on the borderline of our reference, I think?—I think that is rather an important point.

2931. (*Chairman.*) The presiding officer is on the register?—Yes. If he is on the register in the division somewhere, he ought to be allowed to record his vote.

2932. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It is a physical difficulty. He cannot be at the proper places?—Exactly. I have often known of cases where a presiding officer is registered in the adjoining polling district, and he will get a motor-car, or carriage, or

something or other, and go from the station where he is presiding to the adjoining station, which may take him half an hour or more—perhaps one and a half hours—and he will thus leave his own station sometimes to be presided over by his clerk. That is improper; but I have known it done. In fact I think the Ballot Rules actually say that a man may do anything through his clerk except allow a ballot paper to be put into the ballot box, which, of course, is the essential thing.

2933. You say that an elector ought not to be disfranchised because he is engaged in official duties in connection with an election?—Yes. May I say that we have an Under Sheriffs Association, and I mentioned that I was coming here and asked the association if they thought there was anything I ought to say. I saw one of the committee yesterday, and they wrote a letter stating that they wished me to say that as far as under sheriffs are concerned we see no difficulty in carrying out any new electoral law which is passed, and we shall always be glad to give our assistance and work as loyally as we can in respect of anything which may be done.

The witness withdrew.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

Thursday, 15th July 1909.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.
The Hon. EDWIN S. MONTAGU, M.P.
Sir FRANCIS J. S. HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.
Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D., D.C.L.
The Hon. WILLIAM PEMBER REEVES.
Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

The Right Hon. the EARL GREY, G.C.M.G., called and examined.

2934. (*Chairman.*) You are the Governor-General of Canada?—Yes.

2935. I understand you come here to-day, and wish to give evidence, in your personal capacity, and in no sense in your official capacity?—No, I should not be at liberty to say anything about Canada.

2936. It is true you are about to appoint a Committee in Canada to inquire into similar questions to those we are inquiring into here?—A resolution of the House of Commons has been passed appointing a Committee, but that Committee had not been appointed when I left Canada. It has been suggested to me, by the Mover of the Resolution, that I should give evidence before that Committee, and if it was thought advisable by His Majesty's Canadian Ministers that I should do so, I should be glad to give evidence. It depends upon them rather than upon me.

2937. You were some time ago an active supporter of Lord Courtney and Sir John Lubbock, in their campaign in 1885?—In 1885 I went round the country with Mr. Courtney and Sir John Lubbock (as they then were) with a piece of chalk and a blackboard, trying to show, by diagrams, to the people how simple would be the application of the single transferable vote to a constituency returning three or more members.

2938. Do you still hold the same views?—I still hold the views even more strongly than I did then. Referring to 1885, we were derided particularly by Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Randolph Churchill, and we were informed that the application of the single transferable vote to elections was new-fangled and unintelligible, and would not be comprehended by the average elector. In order to answer that I organised an election among the miners in 1885. I was the

chief returning officer and employed working miners as my assistants. I organised that election simply with the view of showing that the intelligence of the average man was quite equal to the task of running an election on those lines.

2939. In that election do you think the minority were fully represented? Was the divergence of opinion sufficient?—That election was managed by miners. The ballot papers had been marked by miners who had never had an opportunity of putting a X upon a ballot paper, because it was before the extension of the household suffrage to the counties. The result of that election was to convince the miners that this was a principle which was fair and capable of being easily applied to election contests. The men who were assisting, with the exception of myself, were men who were earning their living by wielding the pick in the mines. We had had no private rehearsals; they were a body of untrained men, and the rapidity with which the votes were counted by perfectly untrained men convinced everyone present that here was a system which only required to be made known to satisfy everyone as to the possibility of the application of the principle.

2940. You do not think there are any practical difficulties in the way of the adoption of the single transferable vote?—The only practical difficulty in the way of the adoption of the principle is that it is new.

2941. Your main reason for supporting this scheme is that it will secure true reflection of the national opinion?—Yes, I approach the consideration of this from the standpoint of one who believes that the national interests of the country require the establishment of a Parliament which shall be a true mirror of the

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opinion of the people, securing to the majority of the electors the majority of the representation and also giving to every large section of opinion a representation proportionate to its strength.

2942. It has been frequently urged against this scheme that it will tend to destroy the dual party system. Is that your opinion?—That is purely an assumption. I do see other evils—glaring evils—inherent in the present system which I think are even greater than the fears which have been expressed on that subject. If I may summarise it shortly for the convenience of the Commission, I would point out that the evils of the present system in my opinion are that, under the present system, there is no security against the evil of a minority rule, that is the minority of the electors in the country getting the majority of representation. There is no security against the disfranchisement of large sections of opinion entitled by their numbers to representation in the House of Commons. There is no freedom, or very little freedom of choice to the individual elector, as to what exercise he shall make of his franchise. I go further and say that the present system tends to emasculate the representative—if I may use such a term—making it necessary for him, in the utterance of his opinions, to have regard to the views of the butcher and baker in the street who may happen to have the controlling vote. I further say that the present system offers a direct premium on corruption and on bribery, and also it is objectionable on the ground that it gives excessive power to cranks and faddists. That is an array of evils which is very much greater than the possible apprehension that a new system may work in a novel way which is not foreseen by party politicians.

2943. You do not consider that in fact the actual recording of the votes would be made more difficult and put more power in the hands of the party organisers?—I do not see how it could.

2944. You do not think they would adopt a system such as was adopted under the old cumulative vote system?—No, the cumulative vote was a faulty application of a sound principle requiring manipulation and party organisation. The single transferable vote does not make any such organisation necessary.

2945. Do you anticipate any danger, as an actual result of this system, of the majority in Parliament being very small?—That is a conjecture—a prophecy which I am unable to make. All I say is that you have at present a system which, if it were a novel system, and if it were proposed to people who had never tried it, would be laughed out of court in five minutes. It could not hold its own against the criticism which would be levelled against it. It was tried, as you are aware, in Japan, when the Constitution was established in 1889. They abandoned that system of single-member constituencies and the majority vote in 1900. Now they have a new election law. Tokio has 11 members, and each man one vote.

2946. And a single transferable vote?—Yes, so I understand. You asked whether I hold the view still that I held in 1885. I may say that when I saw in the newspapers in Canada, a report of Mr. Asquith's St. Andrews speech, and of his answer to the deputation which approached him on the subject of proportional representation, I said privately to Sir Wilfred Laurier: If Mr. Asquith was really going to bring forward a new Reform Bill on the basis of one man one vote, and every vote of equal value so as to secure the certainty of the rule of the majority with a fair representation of large local minorities in proportion to their strength, I regarded it as so important that I would be tempted to resign the Governor-Generalship of Canada (which I believe is the most enviable billet in the service of the Crown), in order to come back and support Mr. Asquith in getting that much desired reform carried.

2947. In fact, under the present system, does every section of the community obtain representation in the House of Commons?—I do not think it does.

2948. Although, perhaps, it does indirectly?—Indirectly, but not directly in a way that gives the elector any feeling that he is represented. I feel that this system of proportional representation is required

to do two big things: first, to secure the real enfranchisement of the elector and, secondly, the emancipation of the elected. To call the elector a free and independent voter is a play on words. I do not consider that the elector is either free or independent. His choice is limited to the vote for one of two candidates both of whom he may detest. I do not think you make a vote of living real value to the average elector until he feels that he can vote for a man after his own heart without throwing his vote away.

2949. To secure that result what sort of size of constituency do you think will be required?—You must have constituencies returning from three to five members.

2950. Do you think the present system tends to the exclusion of moderate men from the House of Commons?—I believe the average Briton is a man who holds moderate, and not extreme, opinions. I believe the present system tends to the exclusion of the moderate man from the House of Commons. I am in favour of this proportional representation principle because it helps to make it easy for the man holding moderate opinions to go into the House of Commons. If you will allow me, I will give you one instance of how fatal it is to the interests of the country if you have a system of election which does not make it easy for men of moderate opinions to be represented. Go back to the Civil War in the United States. The advocates of proportional representation in the United States have often pointed out that if they had had the single transferable vote and constituencies returning three or more members the Civil War would never have taken place. What happened was this: they had extreme opinions getting monopoly of representation in the north and south. Mr. Lincoln had no moderate opinion to use as an instrument of compromise. He had solid north conflicting with solid south, with the result of which you are aware. If they had had the moderate men—if they had had the minorities in the north and south represented in Congress, it is held that that war would not have taken place. That seems to me to supply a very powerful illustration and a very eloquent illustration from days gone by of the heavy calamity suffered by a country through the disfranchisement of moderate men. It shows the danger run if you have a system of election which makes it almost impossible for men holding moderate opinions to get into the House of Commons.

2951. Do you consider the Government of the day would receive the same support if large numbers of its supporters only held moderate views?—I think if you have a large number of moderate men in the House of Commons, whose bond of union is a common interest in the national well-being, you will have an influence behind good government which will be of immense assistance to the Government so long as it governs justly. The presence of these moderate men in the House of Commons would compel men to have regard to the common sense and fair mind of the country instead of only to the fancied party interest of a majority. That seems to me to be a most valuable security for the chances of good government.

2952. You do not think the fact that the party would necessarily be composed of several sections of divergent opinion would tend to weaken the executive?—No. I feel on that subject that under the present system you may have a small organised party in constituencies equally balanced between Liberals and Conservatives, who have now power out of all proportion to their strength. I believe one of the very great advantages of this system is that it would reduce the power of faddists and sectional interests to their proper proportions; they would no longer be able to control elections as they do now.

2953. One of the advantages claimed by the Proportional Representation Society is that their system would secure the return of independent members. Do you welcome their increase?—I welcome that very strongly. I am aware that there are people who are opposed to the principle of proportional representation because they are afraid of the entrance into the House of Commons of enlightened opinion. They seem to prefer organised ignorance to enlightened freedom.

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I cannot think there are two opinions upon that among men who have national, not party interests at heart.

2954. It has been suggested to us by the opponents of the scheme that the independents this scheme would introduce are the faddists to whom you refer?—The faddists now control members. Supposing I am standing for a constituency where the parties are equally divided, the faddist section of voters first come to see me at the hotel, and I have to promise them something to secure their votes; and then they go to my antagonist and get an equally good promise from him. The result is that a small party of 50 or 100 men secure in the House of Commons a member who will give expression to their fad. Those men have not a chance under proportional representation of getting a member. They would have the power of showing what their views are with the consolation of knowing their votes are not thrown away by voting for the man after their own hearts. They would publish to the whole world what their views are, and have the satisfaction of feeling that their vote is given to the man against whose name they put the figure "2" or "3" if it is not wanted for "No. 1." Their vote is used. They are represented. At the same time they have allowed all the world to know what the strength of their particular opinion is in their constituency.

2955. The cleavage in political opinion you consider is now becoming more accentuated in the direction of class than it was formerly?—If I do not occupy the time of the Commission too long on that point, I might say that when Parliament resolved to equalise the town and the county franchise it was obvious that the security which had formerly prevailed, or the provisions which had formerly been relied upon to secure variety of representation in the House of Commons, would no longer exist, and that new methods would have to be adopted in order to secure a House of Commons which should be a mirror of the nation with every variety of interest represented in proportion to its strength. It seemed to me that as soon as you equalised the town and country franchise, you gave to one class in every constituency, with the exception of the Universities, the power of securing for itself the representation, and it would appear only to be a question of time before organised labour would be able to secure every single seat in the country in a moment of popular passion. I do not think it is likely to happen, because I am glad to believe that the division of political opinion in this country is perpendicular and not horizontal. One of the evils of the present system which prevails to-day is that you have a system which tends to make a horizontal and not a perpendicular cleavage, and that I regard as a danger to the State.

2956. You consider that proportional representation would undoubtedly tend to remedy that?—I do not think there is the slightest doubt about that.

2957. For instance, organised labour would receive its representatives as well as the other classes?—As soon as you apply the single transferable vote system you have an absolute security that every important section of opinion will be able to secure in the House of Commons a representation in proportion to its strength.

2958. The rise of the Labour Party has been one of the arguments brought forward for the adoption of this proportional representation scheme. They say they do not now receive their proper share?—I would sympathise with that view. If I were a trade unionist I should certainly be in favour of proportional representation, because it would enable me to secure a larger representation of labour than exists at present. That is quite consistent with the fear to which I give expression, that in moments of popular passion you might have a whirlwind which would sweep right through the constituencies of the country. But under ordinary circumstances the trades unionists have a right to have representation in the House of Commons without being compelled to poll an absolute majority of the electors.

2959. As a practical method, would you be prepared to adopt this scheme in limited areas for a start?—The British people go tentatively and by steps, and I think

the country is not converted yet to the principle of proportional representation, but I should strongly advocate in the next Reform Bill giving power to any city to apply the principle of proportional representation to its own area, and then you would have an experiment.

2960. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) Do you say "it is not converted," or "if it is not converted"?—You know better than I do if it is converted, but I understand it is under the process of conversion, and I hope the result of your Commission may help to convert it, but I do not think it is converted at the present time.

2961. (*Chairman.*) You would not say it is an active and vital matter of politics at the present moment?—I regard it in that way, because I believe the honesty of political life is involved in the application of this principle. I say you have to enfranchise the elector to begin with. He is not enfranchised now, although you nominally call him free and independent. You have also to emancipate the elected and allow him to give free utterance to his honest opinions of what the national interests require, without feeling he will have to lose his seat if he gives free and courageous expression to his political convictions.

2962. In this connection would you be prepared to see the convention adopted that the Government of the day shall not regard itself as entirely bound by any chance vote—that a chance defeat of a Government should not compel that Government to resign? That is an argument which has been advanced by Lord Hugh Cecil?—What has that to do with proportional representation?

2963. He said that under proportional representation undoubtedly the Government would receive a smaller majority, and therefore would be more liable to chance defeats?—I am unable to say what an enlightened House of Commons, elected under this system, should do as to the change of their Ministers. It would rest with them. I am not prepared to make any suggestion. I should be perfectly content to leave the decision as to what Ministry should enjoy the confidence of the people to the representatives of the people fairly elected. I do not admit that they are fairly elected at the present time.

2964. You do not consider it would lead to a rapid change of Ministries?—If you ask me my opinion, my opinion is that it would probably lead to the longer duration of Ministries, but that is only an expression of opinion. To sum up shortly, my views are these: That proportional representation is a method required by the principle of democracy, which requires the government of the people by the people and for the people. I object to the present system because I regard it as a system of government of the people by the caucus for a party. I put in that rough way the difference between the two.

2965. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) You made an interesting reference to the United States. Can you, as a neighbour, say whether opinion in favour of proportional representation has made any advance in the United States?—I am not aware that it has. I think it is an academic question as it is at present in Canada, although it was brought forward in a very able speech by one of the most respected members of the House of Commons, and a committee will, I hope, soon be appointed to consider it.

2966. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) What you told us about the miners' election was very interesting, because I gather you were satisfied that they found it quite simple to mark their papers on the single transferable vote system?—It is not beyond the intelligence of a miner in Northumberland, or a working man anywhere, when all he has to do is to put "1," "2," "3," and "4" in the order of his choice against the names of the candidates. It worked very well.

2967. It worked very well?—Yes. Not only as to the marking, but as to the counting by men taken out of the seams who lie down on their stomachs and hew at the face of the coal. Those are the men we employed as counting officers.

2968. I was going to ask you on that very point, whether at that date the system of counting was the

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same as that which takes place under the Courtney system?—Exactly; the single transferable vote.

2969. There was an overflow of the surplus votes after the quota had been obtained from one candidate to another?—The overflow vote was distributed, not scientifically as I understand it is proposed to do now, but after the quota required to secure a candidate's return had been obtained, then all the other votes that came up with "1" against his name were transferred to the candidate with the figure "2" against his name. We made several experiments with the view of satisfying our critics as to what element of chance there was in the order in which we counted the votes. We had about 10,000 votes, and we went through a continuous process of shuffling up all these ballot papers together, and we found each batch of votes had about the same proportion of preferences—just as in a sack of flour which has been well mixed up whatever part of the bag you take a sample from you get almost identical results. Now I understand that that objection has been solved by a more scientific way of counting the votes.

2970. Anyhow you were satisfied with the result, and that the result was fairly attained?—I was satisfied with the result, and that the result was fairly attained. That the miners were equally satisfied is evident from the fact that they have applied the principle to the election of the members of their committees of their trades unions organisation, and I understand from a paper just sent to me from Northumberland that there is a likelihood of this system of voting coming into favour with the co-operative societies in Northumberland. At a recent meeting of the Seaton Delaval Co-operative Society, with a membership of 1,800, it was proposed that the president, secretary, and treasurer should be elected on a preferential system. The proposal was adopted. The meeting favoured the idea of electing the whole committee of management on that system. In the course of a few months the rules of the society will undergo revision, and the extension of the system to the election of the committee will, I am informed, be effected in the opinion of my correspondent without serious opposition. I cannot say that the idea of electing the whole committee has been adopted, because it requires a revision of the rules; but they anticipate no difficulty. The sentiment of the miners is that this is a fair way of doing justice to all opinions, whatever they are.

2971. It is clearly your opinion that the application of proportional representation would break down the party system?—I did not say that.

2972. I do not want to impute it, but I thought that was the result of your examination?—I do not like to commit myself on that point. I say there are so many evils in the present system that the possibility of the party system being broken down seems to me an evil which cannot count in comparison with the greater evils to be removed.

2973. I was not suggesting that it was an evil, but I wanted to have your opinion upon it one way or the other as to whether you hold that the application of the system of proportional representation would affect the party system or not?—I think it would probably secure a Government of moderate opinions, because I believe that the average Briton is the possessor, not of extreme, but of moderate opinions, and I believe that the effect of the application of this principle to your electoral system would be to put in power and keep for a long time a Ministry reflecting that average opinion. The party opposed to them would be the extreme men on both sides, and I think probably the moderate men would hold the balance between the two; but that is only a conjecture.

2974. In fact, the caucus, in your opinion, would lose its control and the moderate men would have a better chance?—That is one reason why I am strongly in favour of it. The professional caucus politician hates it as a rule; that has been my experience.

2975. You have no fear as to the preponderance of moderate opinion in the House of Commons?—I think the presence in the House of Commons of an overwhelming preponderance of moderate opinion would help to keep up the reputation of "the House of

Commons and maintain its supremacy in the constitution. If the House of Commons by a vicious system of electioneering becomes for a moment the instrument of a party which is animated by excessive and, possibly, vindictive opinions, there is a risk of the House of Commons losing the hold it at present enjoys in the confidence of the people.

2976. It has been said on this point over and over again that the preponderance of moderate opinion would weaken the executive and produce a wobbling government?—I do not see that at all.

2977. A government which would not have had the courage to embark in the American Civil War, for instance?—If you go back to the illustration of the American Civil War, if there had been a moderate opinion in Congress, Mr. Lincoln would have been able to compromise the whole difficulty, probably to the lasting and permanent advantage of the American people, without the Civil War. That is a very good illustration, I think, of what the advantage of moderate opinion in Congress or House of Representatives is.

2978. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) What do you mean by saying that the present system places a premium on corruption?—I mean this. This was a little diagram I saw in a Californian pamphlet. It is a see-saw, and parties at each end are equally balanced. Where parties are equally balanced it is necessary for the A party to get one man to come over from B's side of the see-saw. As soon as he crosses A is down on the ground and B is kicking his legs in the air. It is absolutely necessary for B, if he is to be returned, to bribe a man from A's side, and make him pass from that side to B's side of the see-saw, and, therefore, however moral a man may be, and however he may hate corruption, it is absolutely necessary for him to shut his eyes to the manoeuvres of his own supporters, who will be encouraged to bribe a man from the opposite side to come on to his side with a view of securing his return. That is what I mean by saying that it puts an absolute premium on corruption, because I have to bribe from the other side, or induce from the other side, a man to come to my own side in order to secure my return.

2979. (*Sir Francis Hopwood.*) It may be done by eloquence alone?—If it could be done by eloquence alone that would be the greatest argument in favour of proportional representation. I understand that the most powerful argument against the application of this principle is that the average elector is so apathetic and so ignorant that he is not affected by ordinary arguments.

2980. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) One of the objections given before us to a system of proportional representation, is that it will make the constituencies larger?—I think there is an advantage in that. A man has a wider outlook.

2981. Therefore it would be very difficult to reach every elector for the purpose of his political education?—Give me a town with which you are conversant and the number of electors.

2982. I was thinking of the country districts?—I can understand that objection applying in South Africa, but I think we in this small island are so thronged with population that the area of our constituencies returning three members would not be beyond reach. That area would be far smaller than the members in Canada have to travel in order to reach their constituencies returning one member.

2983. You think three members is the sort of number you would suggest?—I think you must have three or more. Personally I say three or five would give an ideal constituency.

2984. Another objection urged is that the present system gives excessive power to the faddists?—Yes.

2985. But under your system the faddist would return his own member?—If strong enough in the constituency. Supposing you have a constituency of three members, a faddist has to have one more than 25 per cent. of the electors behind him, and when you have 25 per cent. of the people of a big town behind you, then, I think, your opinion may have some other more complimentary name attached to it than that of a "fad."

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2986. The objection to the word "faddist" is merely the definition you put upon it?—Yes.

2987. The faddist may be the moderate man or the enlightened elector?—Then the weight of his eloquence is the candidate's only means; he has to appeal to the enlightenment of the constituency in order to get in.

2988. Supposing you had a system of proportional representation with three members, and each party was running three candidates, and there was a considerable proportion but a minority of sectional opinion, it would be equally advantageous to each party to try and rope in that group of "faddists." Therefore you would have the same kind of corruption as exists now?—It certainly would be to their advantage, but not necessarily. Now it is an absolute necessity; you must have a caucus organising your votes. One of the great advantages of the proportional representation system is that it enables a man of independent views to come before his constituency and to secure his election if he can obtain, in a constituency returning three members, one more than one fourth of the constituency behind him. There is a great difference between one more than one fourth and one more than half.

2989. (Sir Charles Eliot.) About how many people took part in the model election you spoke of among the miners?—We issued 10,000 ballot papers. I have not had time in the last two days to look up the evidence which has been put before you, and I am only speaking the views I formed very strongly 25 years ago, and which I have seen no reason to abandon by one iota since.

2990. About how many candidates would an elector be considering at the same time?—In this little model election I forget how many, but Mr. Gladstone got an overwhelming majority, and then the next was Sir Wilfrid Lawson, the next Lord Randolph Churchill. Mr. Gladstone was declared elected, and his 2,776 surplus votes were distributed in accordance with the second preferences.

2991. I want to know whether it showed that the miners were able to consider the claims of a good many candidates, say 10 or 15, which is the usual case, I believe, under systems of proportional representation?—The total number of papers returned was 6,601 in this little model election. There were three members required and six candidates were nominated, and they were very varied.—General Gordon, Lord Randolph Churchill, and Mr. Gladstone and others.

2992. The miners were satisfied with the principle, and they still employ it themselves?—Yes, they are applying it as far as they can.

2993. Supposing optional powers were given to cities, as you suggested, to apply proportional representation in their own area, do you think there would be any chance of there being sufficiently strong opinion in favour of it among the miners in this northern district for it to be adopted?—I have not had a discussion with them for 20 years on the subject, but my impression, from what I know of them, is that they would be in favour of it. I understand that Mr. Burt, whose example carries very great weight, and deservedly so, with the miners in Northumberland, is strongly in favour of it, and I find many of the intelligent and best educated trade unionists are in favour of it. I may say that the miners in Northumberland, owing to a course of lectures on political economy in the university extension course, which they largely attended about 20 years ago, are as a rule strong supporters of Mill, and they know the 7th chapter, on Representative Government, probably better than a great many people in London do, and they are in favour of the principle as a just principle.

2994. What you particularly desire to see is large constituencies. You would not be satisfied with the application of the transferable vote to single-member constituencies?—No, I do not think that would help you. To have a fair experiment in proportional representation I regard it as a *sine quâ non* that you should have a minimum of three members.

2995. Do you think seven or nine-member constituencies would be practicable?—I should say so—three to seven. With regard to a town which has

seven or nine members, I should like to keep to the community of the town. May I put in a Review containing an article I wrote in 1885? I may say that then I was tempted to suggest the Belgian system, which is known as the D'Hondt system, with a view of meeting the ignorance of people at that time upon the whole subject of proportional representation. I put in this article, adhering to all the views expressed there, with the exception of my recommendation as to the way in which it is to be applied. I have always been in favour of what we call the Courtney-Hare-Mill system applied to constituencies with three members, and I was at that time, but, for practical purposes, I thought it better to put the D'Hondt system before the people because I thought they would understand it better, and it would get over a certain amount of opposition.

2996. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) You were saying that in these larger constituencies there would be a political improvement in the character of members?—I think there would.

2997. They would be elected more for their political qualities than for their local influence?—That is my view.

2998. Do you consider that there is a good deal, or an excessive amount, of weight attached to local popularity and influence, under the present system?—That is inevitable, is it not.

2999. Again, are you impressed with the force of the argument that some witnesses have expressed to us, that there would be a very great increase in the expense to individual candidates with elections in these larger districts?—I have formed no opinion upon that matter, but my impression would be, that the expense would not necessarily be so great as now.

3000. A well-known politician in evidence here stated that, in his opinion, if the districts returned nine members, and were large enough for that, the election expenses would be nine times as great for each man. Do you consider that reasonable?—Let us suppose a town returning nine members, and a candidate has to secure one more than one-tenth of the votes given. As soon as he has got that number he is safe, and I should think he might do it for a very much smaller sum than he now has to pay.

3001. You think, in fact, he would have to stand a proportion of the expenses, and not a multiplication of the present expenses?—It never occurred to me that the expense of standing on the proportional representation system would be greater than it is now. On the contrary, I believe that, directly and indirectly, the expenses necessary where you have to secure an absolute majority are greater than where you only have to get the quota.

3002. Again, it is suggested that the result of proportional representation would be small majorities in Parliament, and a very much closer condition of parties in Parliament?—I really have no power of saying how the people would elect to be represented. I approach this matter from the standpoint of a democrat, who says the principle of democracy requires that Parliament should be a mirror of the nation.

3003. In fact your state of feeling is that you would be prepared to risk that?—Certainly, I say I have to secure the enfranchisement of the elector and the emancipation of the elected, and those two desiderata are so great and so desirable that it is worth while running considerable risk in order to obtain them.

3004. You are not apprehensive that if parties were closely balanced in Parliament the value of a few individual votes would be so great as to cause some risk of corruption there?—That is what is happening in almost every single constituency to-day in electing your man. I believe, with a House of Commons in which the intelligent opinion of the country is properly represented, there would probably not be so much risk as there is now.

3005. You in fact prefer the risk of the few wobbling men in Parliament, rather than the risk of the election being turned by wobbling electors in the constituencies?—I do not know that the wobbler in the House of

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Commons would be such a potent factor. He may be now.

3006. You think as a matter of fact under the proportional representation system men would be returned as supporters of very definite opinions and definite

policies?—As a rule, yes; and for their individual character also.

3007. But they would be trusted to remain faithful to the policies they were elected to support?—I think so, certainly.

The witness withdrew.

The Hon. JOHN M'CALL called and examined.

3008. (Chairman.) You are the Agent-General for Tasmania?—Yes.

3309. You have given study to the systems of election which have prevailed in Tasmania?—Yes, from the time it was first under the consideration of the Tasmanian Parliament until its adoption in the first instance by the two cities, and then afterwards when it was tried at the first Federal Election in the State.

3010. You have prepared a memorandum, which you put in as evidence?—Yes. [*The memorandum was handed in and is as follows:*]

Memorandum by the Agent-General for Tasmania.

The proportional voting was first given a trial in Tasmania in 1897, under what is known as the Hare-Clark system, the late Judge Clark's name being associated with Mr. Hare's in naming the system owing to the fact that he was the one who lessened the element of chance in connection with the distribution of the surplus votes.

At the General Election in 1900 the system was given a further trial, but on both occasions it was limited to the elections for the cities of Hobart and Launceston.

At the first Commonwealth elections, the system had a better trial, as members for the House of Representatives and the Senators were elected under it, the State voting as one electorate.

Unfortunately, in 1901, the Act was repealed so far as State elections were concerned, and the Commonwealth Parliament adopted single electorates for the House of Representatives, and the Block system of voting for the Senate in the case of Senate elections, each State voting as one electorate. The 1901 Electoral Act (State) made provision for single electorates, not a voice being heard in favour of the two seated constituencies that had existed before the introduction of the Hare-Clark system.

At the Commonwealth election it was found there were less informal votes than in the Block system, under which Tasmania elected her representatives to the Federal Convention. The advocates of proportional representation were very disappointed when it was abolished, and continued to advocate its re-introduction, with the result that during the last Parliament it was again placed on the Statute book, the State being divided into five electorates, each to return six members. In this measure a great improvement was secured by the adoption of Nansen's quota.

The last General Election, held on the 30th April of this year, was conducted under the system, and, so far as I can learn, it has given satisfaction. The results were out for Denison, where the chief electoral officer resided, on the night of the election, and all the results were known and confirmed on the 3rd May, three days after the election, all the papers having been sent to Hobart, and had it not been necessary for the chief electoral officer to go through these papers the results would have been made known earlier. Of course, the No. 1 votes were known in each division soon after the close of the poll.

The informal votes were not excessive, and the experience gained shows there is nothing in the contention that it is likely to cause increased risk of error and tends to cause demands for recounts of petitions. Men of high standing conduct the election in the presence of the candidate's scrutineers, the method adopted securing all the checks of double entry book-keeping. The result of the election is over; for 30 seats 60 candidates submitted themselves. Twelve members belong to the Labour Party, and the other 18, though made up of various parties, are being styled as the Anti-Socialist Party. I should say they hold Liberal views, though some much more pronounced

than others. I understand that Sir Elliott Lewis has been able to form a Cabinet that will command the united support of the so-called Anti-Socialist Party. I might explain that this name is given to the party by the Press.

I do not know that they accept it; however, I suppose, after all we have recently heard about the power of the Press, they will have to be branded Anti-Socialists, whether they like it or not. Of this I am certain, that they all believe in the State owning its own railways, in State education, and most of them would agree to the State controlling anything, if they were satisfied it was to the advantage of the State and its people. The point I desire to make is this—it is possible to have the two-party system (necessary owing to the existence of the Labour, who hold aloof from all others), with one party composed of those who have been returned for different reasons, that is to say, the out-and-out Anti-Labour man, the temperance reformer (outside the Labour Party), the man who obtained most of his votes on the question of Upper House reform, and so on.

That is to say, if the Labour opposition introduce a measure which commends itself to some of the other party they can expect their vote, knowing it will not affect the life of the Government. The party outside of Labour say to the Cabinet, "We wish you to administer the departments, and so long as we have confidence in you we will vote that confidence whenever you consider it is necessary. All we ask in return is that you will leave us free to vote on measures in accordance with our political convictions." In Parliament I advocated this for years, and believe what has been brought about in Tasmania will soon spread to other States. It is sane government.

In this country I know of electors who are Protectionists, but as they look upon the education question as one of conscience they will always vote Liberal (that is, Free Trade till the question is settled), so that a man has no hope of being represented on both questions by the same member; he must under the existing system put in a man who will vote against one of the important questions he desires to support.

If there is a large number of men who believe in Tariff Reform and the full measure of State education or the present Government's Liquor Bill, why should they not have proper representation in the House of Commons?

It is said that substantial minorities are now represented in a rough-and-ready way—in the foregoing instance it is very rough—the man supporting one of his principles is bound to vote against the other principle he would like to support.

It might be argued that the Tasmanian Labour Party ought to be satisfied though they have no Labour representative of their own in the Australian Senate, because the Senators from Western Australia are all Labour representatives; surely it would be better if they had their right proportion from Tasmania, and if those outside of Labour had theirs from Western Australia.

In Tasmania when we had the proportional system Labour had one Senator, and had it been continued they would now have had two, but at present under the Block system they have none, and they must remain without representation from their own State until such time (if it ever comes) as they have a majority; then they will take the lot, and no other party will be represented; this is the most objectionable system of election.

Proportional representation is desirable, because—

1. It allows substantial minorities representation.
2. It lessens the evil influence of personal enemies of a particular candidate; little

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- cliques are no longer powerful in opposition, and can only help to return their own representative.
3. So far as the elector is concerned the method is simple.
 4. It helps to do away with the personal element in elections, and causes the politics of the country to get far greater consideration.
 5. It makes corruption more difficult, as the winning number of votes to be obtained is greater.
 6. It prevents minorities in the country having a majority in the Parliament while securing them their fair share of representation.
 7. It reduces the cost of elections to the State.
 8. It would put politics on a higher plane. At present if a member disagrees with his party on an important item, he must either sink his principles and vote for it, leave the House, or if he is a very strong man and desires to be a prominent figure in politics he may stand up for the particular principle in dispute, pass over to the other party, and support a host of other measures he has always been opposed to.

The only solid objection I know to the system is that it increases the cost of elections to the candidates. It appears to me that this might be got over by the State assuming some of the cost, and by legislation that would prevent the candidates being fleeced, as I understand is done in this country. We have got over this part of the trouble in Tasmania. So far as legitimate expenditure is concerned, I hope to see the State rendering assistance.

I will take the Franklin electorate to illustrate the working of the system. The Labour Party were organised; they had three candidates and their supporters were shown how to vote; two ministers stood for this division. Seven other candidates offered themselves, one was styled a Liberal democrat, the others Conservatives or Anti-Socialists; personally, I should describe most of the latter as independent candidates. Outside the Labour Party each worked for the No. 1 votes, there being no party ticket.

The counting of votes started at 9 a.m., and was completed shortly after 6 o'clock in the evening.

The Franklin is the largest and most sparsely settled of all the electorates, so that out of 19,041 electors on the roll only 10,286 recorded their votes, of these 278 were informal, so that as six members were required, the quota was 1,470.

First Count.

Earle (Labour)	2,257
(elected, and surplus 787.)	
Evans (Premier)	1,347
Ewing	1,244
Dicker (Labour)	1,061
Hean (Minister of Lands)	882
Hodgman	829
Leatham	740
Bennett	646
Giblin	588
Wood	431
Lipscombe	130
Hilton	129

Earle's 787 surplus was transferred as follows:—

Dicker (Labour)	598	1,599
(elected, and surplus of 129.)		
Evans	22	1,369
Ewing	16	1,260
Hean	10	892
Hodgman	14	843
Leatham	6	746
Bennett	4	650
Giblin	35	623
Wood	2	433
Hilton	134	263
Lipscombe	4	134

785 (2 lost in fractions.)

Dicker's surplus of 129 transferred as follows:—

Evans	1	1,370
Ewing	1	1,261
Hean	2	894
Hodgman	1	844
Leatham	1	747
Bennett	1	651
Giblin	3	626
Wood	0	433
Hilton	113	376
Lipscombe	1	135

124 (5 of the transferred votes being fraction losses.)

There being no more surplus votes and only one elected, the lowest on the poll (Lipscombe) was struck out, and his votes transferred as follows:—

Evans	14	1,384
Ewing	13	1,274
Hean	11	905
Hodgman	18	862
Leatham	3	750
Giblin	51	677
Bennett	3	654
Wood	6	439
Hilton	4	380

123

12 exhaust votes

135

Hilton was then discarded and his votes distributed, bringing the totals up to: Evans, 1,392; Ewing, 1,280; Hean, 914; Hodgman, 871; Leatham, 760; Giblin, 719; Bennett, 655; Wood, 439—the exhaust votes in this case amounting to 291. It is therefore clear that the Labour supporters as a whole limited their marking of papers to the three Labour candidates. Had they given their fourth preference to Giblin (whose views were the nearest to their own) he would have had an excellent chance of being returned; it is almost certain he would have been, but as I have nothing to show how he was marked on the papers of those discarded after his discard, I cannot be certain. Wood, who is a great loss to the Parliament, having been a minister in Victoria in 1856, and a barrister in London for many years, and who brought the result of many years' valuable experience to the debates, was the next to be discarded. On the distribution of his votes the totals stood:—

Evans	1,446
Ewing	1,331
Hodgman	1,022
Hean	977
Leatham	772
Bennett	744
Giblin	732

On the distribution of Giblin's available votes the totals were:—

Evans	1,522
(elected and a surplus of 52)	
Ewing	1,456
Hodgman	1,147
Hean	1,140
Bennett	805
Leatham	800
Giblin's exhaust votes amounted to	143

Leatham's votes were distributed after Evans' small surplus of 52 had been allotted. The result now stands Ewing, 1,535 (elected and a surplus of 65); Hodgman, 1,413; Hean, 1,383; Bennett, 847. The exhaust votes in this count amounted to 659.

Ewing's surplus was then distributed as follows:—

Bennett	12
Hean	8
Hodgman	12
Exhaust votes 37 leaving the position:—	
Hodgman	1,424
Hean	1,390
Bennett	858

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When Bennett was discarded it was unnecessary to count further, but I have been furnished with the result of the distribution of his votes which was :—

Hodgman	-	1,760	(elected with surplus)
Horn	-	1,552	(elected with surplus)
Exhaust votes 37.			

In this case the same candidates would have been returned by the No. 1 votes alone, the only difference being the order of the last two elected.

(Signed) JOHN M'CALL.

3011. Do you consider, speaking generally, that the system has been a success?—Undoubtedly.

3012. And that it has tended to increase the interest taken in politics by the populace?—Yes, I believe it has led to politics taking a more definite part in the election; that the personal element has been lost to some extent, and to that extent the system may be unpopular with a certain class of people who always like a personal fight.

3013. But, broadly speaking, the issues are now political, whereas formerly they might in instances have been personal?—Yes, or much more so.

3014. That, you admit, is a great advantage?—A great advantage.

3015. The organised parties in Tasmania are, I understand, all in favour of this system?—I believe they are now. At first the Labour Party were against it. I think the Tasmanian Labour Party—at any rate, the majority of them—now favour it; but I notice from some references made by the leaders of the Labour movement in Australia that they are inclined to condemn it. I have not been supplied with their reasons, but one can see this reason: that under the old system of single electorates they were getting all, what we might call, their own seats, that is to say, the mining seats, and seats in the districts where labour was well organised—they were getting those seats without any trouble. In addition to that, wherever they had a small Labour Party in the constituency they were in the position of squeezing the best terms from the candidates who were standing for the constituency—that is to say, in those districts where they were not strong enough to run a candidate themselves—so that they could see the possibility in the future of having a Labour Parliament.

3016. You refer to the Block system of voting. What exactly is that?—The Block system is where everybody is compelled to give a vote of equal value to every member to be returned. If three members are to be returned, then every elector must vote for three people, neither more nor less, and each vote will be of the same value. Under that system they now elect the senators to the Commonwealth Senate. There are six senators from each State, and three retire at one time, and they are elected under the Block system.

3017. I understand if all three places in the ballot paper are not filled up, the vote is invalidated?—Yes.

3018. There is no penalty attaching to not voting?—No.

3019. Do you consider that is a successful method?—No, most objectionable. I point out in my memorandum that in the case of Tasmania in the first election for the Senate they returned one Labour man. That was under what is known there as the Hare-Clark system. When he came up for re-election he had to submit himself under the Block system, and he was not returned. Labour will never be returned so far as the Tasmanian representation in the Senate is concerned, until they get a majority. When they get a majority they will take the whole three seats, and then all the other parties will be without representation, if that day ever comes. That is a strong objection to the Block system, that only one party is represented—the party with a majority. The result is that in Tasmania we have no Labour representative in the Senate. In Western Australia they have all Labour representatives.

3020. You do not consider that counterbalances itself?—No, I think it is very undesirable. The Labour people of Tasmania would naturally like to have their own representatives in the Senate, and the

people outside the Labour Party in Western Australia would prefer to have their representatives there rather than depend on the Tasmanian representatives.

3021. Would you say in Tasmanian politics there are many sub-currents of opinion which desire to obtain expression?—I would not say that there are many. There are some. Those opinions would, no doubt, influence a man in making his No. 1 choice.

3022. Under that system of election, do those sub-currents obtain representation?—Yes.

3023. You think no considerable section of the community goes without its direct representation in Parliament?—No considerable section in Tasmania.

3024. What effect has it had upon the general conditions of public life? Would you say it has been an improvement?—The first effect has been to give the labour people a very largely increased representation, which I think was foreseen by those of us who took a keen interest in the matter would be so. The other parties—who, of course, constitute the majority—have found it necessary to unite, so far as administration is concerned, and a Government has been formed which will have the support of all those outside labour. But the members supporting that Government will be allowed to exercise their freedom of conscience sufficiently to vote in support of the opinions they have enunciated on the public platform. There will be no possibility of a whip being held over them and their being compelled to vote in opposition to the views they were elected to support.

3025. Do you think that has any effect on the stability of the Government?—No, I do not think it should have. I think so long as that majority are willing to vote confidence in the Government, and show no desire to have it replaced, the Government should remain in office.

3026. The majority is composed of rather divergent sections, is it not?—I should say not, because although classed as Conservatives and Anti-Socialists, and all that sort of thing by the Press, as a matter of fact the bulk of our people are people who hold Liberal views. They may not all go the same extent. I mean to say the bulk of those who really take an active part in politics hold Liberal views.

3027. Do you think the system would enable the personnel of the House to be improved, or otherwise?—I think it would. I am not prepared to say that it has been altogether so in this case. There are some decided improvements, but there is one exception to it—one, a very able man, has not been returned.

3028. Has it so far produced any member who you would say is definitely independent in character, and who stands aloof from all parties?—There was the Franklin election, in which there were six members returned—two Labour members and two members of the Ministry, and the other two I should say were quite independent.

3029. Were the practical difficulties of the single transferable vote found to be formidable?—No, there was no difficulty at all.

3030. In your experience of Tasmania, you think it could be easily adopted in this country?—There would be no difficulty. Mr. Hare's idea cannot be adopted, I take it. Perhaps it is not practicable to adapt it to a country with the large number of representatives you have here in the House of Commons. Indeed, we do consider it practicable to apply it to Tasmania except to the case of the Commonwealth Senate elections. We have five electorates each returning six members. To secure the good effects of the system you must have a considerable number elected under it.

3031. You call it the Hare-Clark system?—Yes, because Mr. Clark, when Attorney-General, was in charge of the Bill, and when it was pointed out that so much was left to chance in Mr. Hare's system in allotting the surplus, he fixed that the surplus should be divided in proportion to the number of times any particular candidate was marked No. 2 on the whole of the votes. Since then perhaps a more exact system has been introduced; but I do not know that that is very interesting to you. I have given the details in my memorandum. The exact system is this. They

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take the proportion of different votes used to return a member, and to the balance of that vote they attach the fractional part that is not used of the vote as the transferable value of the vote; that is to say, if 1,000 votes have been recorded for a man, and he obtains 1,500, it has required two-thirds of each vote recorded for him to secure his return, and, therefore, every vote transferred to the second choice has a value of one-third of a vote—if the number is 300, that means the second man has got 100 full votes to be added.

3032. Would you say there was the slightest element of chance in the method of distributing surpluses?—I think there is a very small element of chance under the Hare-Clark system. There is practically none under this method of applying it.

3033. You have not heard any complaint made on that score?—No. I hope to be able to supply the Commission with the chief electoral officer's analyses as soon as they come to hand. I have asked for them. Those analyses I have given in my memorandum are taken from the daily Press.

3034. Your experience is sufficient now to practically prove the feasibility of the system?—Quite. I think in all the election for the First Commonwealth Parliament, with which I had something to do, we were satisfied with it then.

3035. The actual counting of the votes involves several mathematical sums in proportion?—Proportion, decimals or fractions, whichever you like.

3036. Were the individuals employed for counting easily obtained?—Quite.

3037. From what you know of this country, would you say there would be any difficulty on that score here?—I should say no difficulty at all.

3038. I may take it from you that the system in Tasmania so far has worked successfully, and there is no wish on the part of any section of the community to return to the old method?—I think no important section, but you will understand that a system that secures for a definite minority their share of representation will not at once be popular, because a man may be returned for one of those constituencies by one-sixth of the electors—indeed, less—and the other five-sixths may be very hostile to that individual, and they will, of course, blame the system for his return, forgetting that they have got the other five-sixths of the representation and ought to be well satisfied. So that, I think, you are sure to have some of the more active political agents trying to work up some opposition to it, but I think the whole of the Press of the State are supporting it without exception, and I am quite sure those who are prominent in the country have adopted it now finally.

3039. On the question of expense, is it more expensive to work this system?—From the State's point of view?

3040. I am speaking more from the candidate's point of view?—I take it it will be more costly, certainly, and if a candidate is going to run a lone hand it will perhaps be very much more costly, because in most of the Colonies, at any rate in our Colony, it has been the practice for members to cultivate the acquaintance of people very closely; that is, to say, they go to little places and have meetings, and give the people an opportunity of hearing their views and questioning them, perhaps to a greater extent than they would do in this country. I am not speaking with any knowledge of how they run elections in this country. If the same system were followed in these larger electorates, it follows, of course, that the expense would be greater to the candidate.

3041. Do you think the connection which ought to exist between the candidate and the constituency will be lessened?—No, I do not think it will be lessened there.

3042. What is your method in dealing with by-elections?—In a by-election we would simply take the whole area.

3043. Which might involve very great expense?—Yes, if a man has to go through the constituency in

the same careful way as he would when he was going for his quota, and I presume he would.

3044. Have there been any by-elections since your general election?—No.

3045. (Sir Courtenay Ilbert.) You could not apply the proportional representation system to by-elections?—No, it would be a majority of 1 in that case.

3046. Under the Tasmanian system is the expression of preference obligatory, that is to say, must the elector work his paper with 2 and 3, as well as 1?—If there are six members to be elected he is compelled to vote for one and give a preference up to three.

3047. If he does not do that the paper is spoilt?—Yes; it has been shown in some of the returns we have received that there is a large number of "exhaust" papers, and that a goodly number, probably principally the Labour Party, have only exercised the right up to three, with the result, of course, that after securing their two members, where they have been running three, there has been a very large number of exhaust papers, that is, papers which are dead, because there is nothing further to indicate to the returning officer by the appearance of their papers where they should go.

3048. I understand that the result of the adoption of this system has been to increase the representation of the Labour Party?—That is so. We expected that.

3049. It has been suggested that the same result might have been arrived at by redistribution, that is to say, by a redistribution of seats you might have increased the chances of Labour. Would you agree to that point?—I do not see how that could be done at all. The Labour Party have now the representation they are entitled to, at any rate so far as the recorded vote is concerned. Probably they would have got less if everybody had recorded their votes, but they organised and probably brought their voters to the poll better than the other parties. There is no other system which, while securing justice to the Labour Party, will secure to those outside Labour the certainty of representation in the future.

3050. I was merely putting it from the Labour point of view?—The Labour Party are only getting perhaps what they have been refused before, or were entitled to and unable to get under a single-member system.

3051. It has been suggested that they might have got as much under the single-member system by means of a redistribution of seats on an equal electoral basis?—I do not think so. It is more difficult to return a man under a proportional representation system than under the other. He has to get a larger number of adherents under the proportional representation system than he has if it is simply a bare majority of the single electorate, and as Labour's very great strength would be in the mining divisions of the States, and perhaps in the cities, you could hardly cut out districts which would give them that advantage.

3052. (Mr. Pember Reeves.) I think you stated that the Labour Party were well organised?—They are fairly well organised in Tasmania now.

3053. Probably they are the best organised section of politicians in the State?—Quite. The only organised party, I should say.

3054. In fact, as to the present system in Tasmania, whilst it might help a minority which has hitherto been excluded to get fair representation, it is only when that minority is well organised and energetic. At any rate, it is a premium in favour of a well organised majority?—Of course. In their case they are a very large minority.

3055. A powerful and well organised minority?—Yes.

3056. Given both those qualities, that is to say, numerical strength and organisation, a minority may in Tasmania get the representation to which it is entitled?—Yes.

3057. What would be the population, roughly, of one of your electoral districts, 35,000 or 36,000?—Roughly, about 30,000. They vary.

The witness withdrew.

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[Continued.]

Mr. SAMUEL REUBEN GINN called and examined.

3058. (*Chairman.*) You are clerk of the peace for Cambridgeshire?—Yes.

3059. In your official capacity you have had a good deal to do with parliamentary elections?—Yes, firstly as an election agent I had a good deal to do with them, and afterwards as under-sheriff of the county I conducted general elections. Then as clerk of the peace for the county I still have an interest in the local elections.

3060. Taking your memorandum in the order in which you have sketched it out; first of all, taking proportional representation, as far as this scheme is practicable, you think it will require a more skilful and larger staff of counters?—Yes.

3061. And constituencies will require greater organisation?—Yes.

3062. That goes without saying; it is part of the scheme itself?—Yes.

3063. As a practical electioneerer, would you say there would be great difficulties in the way, first of all of the electors in recording their votes, and, secondly, in the way of the clerks in counting them?—Undoubtedly. In the agricultural districts you would have great difficulty in putting the proportional voting system through at the start I have no doubt.

3064. But you think perhaps after one or two elections it ought to work?—Yes, after one or two elections it ought to work as easily as the ballot. When the county electors got the extended franchise we had some difficulty with the ballot, but now it is simple, and proportional representation would be much the same.

3065. Do you consider your staff of counters would have to be greater in number?—Much greater. Of course it depends upon the number of members to be returned for the constituency. The suggestion to me was five to nine; but I heard the previous witness talk about three. It would be very much simpler with three.

3066. But taking a constituency which returned five members, would the aggregate number of counters be greater than in five separate constituencies?—No.

3067. As far as that goes the actual cost of conducting an election ought not to be very much greater?—I do not think it would be much greater. The actual cost of conducting the election from the returning officer's point of view ought not to be greater. From the candidate's point of view, of course, it would be much larger. There can be no doubt about that.

3068. Unless he stood as one of a group?—It would still be larger. The candidate has to get to each elector, and the larger the electorate of course the more expensive it is—both in circularising electors and in canvassing.

3069. You consider the same result, or practically the same result, would be effected by redistribution?—I think so.

3070. You would be prepared to adopt the second ballot?—Yes.

3071. Would you prefer the second ballot to what is known as the alternative vote?—I think so, certainly. At its inception the second ballot would go through much simpler than any other scheme I can think of.

3072. You mean another election to take place, say, within a week, or a few days' time?—Yes, in a few days' time. You must give more than a week between the elections in a county constituency—probably a fortnight.

3073. You do not think that would add largely to the inconvenience and expense of the elections?—No, I think not.

3074. You suggest that under a proportional representation scheme a permanent returning officer should be appointed. Is that because the sheriff would not be representative of the new area?—Partly that and partly on account of the new system of counting, so that you have a returning officer who always has his staff at hand. He would educate his staff to the work.

3075. And the staff would be all expert?—Yes. He must have some of that staff experts, no doubt.

3076. As a matter of fact the Sheriffs and Under-Sheriffs who have conducted many elections are experts, are they not?—Yes.

3077. Would you see any objection to the multiplication of polling stations, or a large increase in the number of them?—It depends upon what regulations are to be laid down as to what is to be done at the polling stations, and who is to preside. I think myself that the whole election might be conducted much more cheaply. I do not think it is necessary to have polling stations with quite so expensive a staff. I think the voters are to be trusted more than the Ballot Act trusts the voters. For instance, take a concrete case. Comparing the elections for county councils with the elections for Parliament, they are done at about half the cost over the same area.

3078. Half the official cost?—Half the official cost. The school is taken as the polling station, and the schoolmaster in the majority of cases is the presiding officer; and, as far as I can see he does equally as well as the staff that conducts the Parliamentary Election.

3079. You say you are in favour of elections being held all on one day?—Yes.

3080. Does the police difficulty present itself to you?—There is not the least difficulty about that, I am convinced.

3081. But is it not a fact that under the present system the police act first of all in one part of the county on one polling day, and then go across and act in another part of the county on the following day?—Yes; but I do not think the police are much wanted, certainly not in agricultural districts.

3082. You think it an unnecessary precaution?—All those precautions are much too elaborate in our day. The voters are more to be trusted than our machinery trusts them.

3083. Again, as regards the sheriff's staff, does not he use the same people over and over again?—To a certain extent he does, but it is not necessary at all.

3084. Would the sheriffs' and under-sheriffs' understudies have to be increased if all elections were held on one day?—Yes, but the permanent returning officer would have a permanent staff; but that would not be a very large staff.

3085. Would you be prepared to adopt the suggestion made to us that the county elections should be held on one day and the borough elections on the following day, so that they would all be counted on the same day?—Yes, but I do not think there is much advantage in it.

3086. You say voters might be allowed to vote by post?—Yes.

3087. Would it be possible then to have any identification? Would that be difficult?—It would be a little more difficult undoubtedly than now, but there is exactly the same difficulty now. The people the sheriffs employ at the polling stations know very little about the electors. It is left really to the agents of the parties to identify voters.

3088. The hours of the election you are in favour of maintaining as at present?—With this modification—I should allow every constituency, every local authority, to decide what hours of election should prevail, but they should have the minimum of the present 12 hours. They might extend the polling hours to 10 o'clock or begin at 7 or 6 o'clock, if they like.

3089. Would you be prepared to suggest an interval in the middle of the day when the polling station should be shut up?—Yes, I would give the county constituency an opportunity of that, but of course they must not close during the dinner hour—any time except between 12 and 2, or something of that sort. There would be no difficulty about that.

3090. You are in favour of the official charges being contributed to by either the Exchequer or the local authority?—I have a very strong opinion that they should fall upon the local authority with a contribution from the Exchequer. The local authorities have proved to be a very good authority with respect to elections for all other purposes, and they would be so for parliamentary purposes, and the expenses would be less.

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[Continued.]

Then if the Exchequer contribution were what I suggest, namely, four-fifths of the present cost, I think it would cover practically the whole cost of the election.

3091. You think the county council should fix the remuneration of the returning officer?—Yes.

3092. Who does it now?—It is subject to taxation by the county court judge, but in practice it is seldom if ever taxed.

3093. Is it a fixed charge?—No, it is not fixed. It is a very elastic charge and a good many complaints are made, but the candidates do not like to tax the costs of returning officers. It should not be left to the candidates. It is inconvenient.

3094. You consider that in a great many details much expense can be saved by using the post?—Yes.

3095. Is it a fact that each candidate has to pay the cost of the conveyance of all ballot-boxes by road?—Yes. If proportional representation were in force it is quite clear in county constituencies the counting could not take place the next day. Then the ballot-boxes might all be sent by post. The writ for the election, which is a most important document, comes by post; but the ballot-boxes are taken by cabs, and sometimes by bicycle to the counting place, and it is not always satisfactory. I know in my experience that the post would be a much more satisfactory and secure way of doing it.

3096. From the point of view of maintaining order, would you see any objection to the counting being delayed for several days?—It would be far better, I think.

3097. There is no objection, you think?—No, no objection.

3098. You do not think it would cause unrest, having an interval between polling and counting?—No, I think not. There would not be so much unrest as we have now. There is some hope that in some of the county constituencies the votes can be counted the same night. The most difficult case I had was in Huntingdon, where we did count the same night. The excitement got very great indeed, and I then said I would never count again the same day.

3099. Are all those matters left in the hands of the sheriff?—Yes.

3100. Would you be prepared to support the appointment of a permanent electoral officer such as they have in one or two Australian Colonies?—Yes, it would be far better, I think.

3101. An officer who would have his deputies in each locality?—No; I did not apprehend your question. I should appoint in each locality a returning officer who should be answerable to the local authority.

The witness withdrew.

3102. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) The locality being what?—The constituency.

3103. (*Mr. Edwin Montagu.*) What is the exact reason why a county council election costs only about half what a parliamentary election costs. How is the money saved?—Simply from the fact that the county council framed a scale which is much lower than the parliamentary scale in the schedule to the Ballot Act for the payment of the whole of the expenses.

3104. And in your opinion the service which they get is as efficient?—Quite—it is exactly the same.

3105. With regard to elections all being held on one day, there is a difference in the time which has to elapse between the issue of the writ and the nomination and the polling in county districts and in urban districts?—Yes.

3106. How would you get over that difficulty?—By making both the longer period, that is to say, bringing the urban districts up to the county.

3107. And not reducing the county?—Not reducing the county.

3108. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) You prefer the second ballot to what is called the alternative vote?—Yes.

3109. Have you any objection to the alternative vote?—No.

3110. Do you think either would work equally well?—I think from my practical experience, the second ballot would work easily—that is all. I see no difficulty about the second ballot. We still have in the county constituencies men who are not very well educated, and they are afraid of any machinery.

3111. Do you think with the larger constituencies contemplated by the proportional representation system that the expense would be very much increased?—The expense would depend upon the number of members to be returned, but it must be very much larger. A large constituency to-day costs very much more than a small one. Take a concrete case—the borough of Cambridge (which I know well), and any division of the county. The expenses of the county compared with the borough are about three times the amount. That would be multiplied by making a larger constituency, going over a greater area. For instance, if there were five members, it would mean taking two counties, so far as my locality is concerned, with a great deal of travelling and with poor railway accommodation for getting from one extreme point to another, and the cost of canvassing, of course, would be very much increased. There might be a set off if two or three candidates were running on the same ticket, and then in some of their expenses there would be a saving; but the idea of proportional representation is rather to the contrary—that they would not run on the same ticket.

NINETEENTH DAY.

Thursday, 22nd July 1909.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

LORD RICHARD FREDERICK CAVENDISH (*Chairman*).

Right Hon. LORD LOCHEE OF GOWRIE, LL.D.

Sir COURTENAY ILBERT, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

Sir CHARLES NORTON ELIOT, K.C.M.G., C.B., LL.D., D.C.L.

Mr. JOHN WALLER HILLS, M.P.

Mr. CHARLES D. ROBERTSON (*Secretary*).

Mr. J. FISCHER WILLIAMS called in and examined.

3112. (*Chairman.*) You are, I believe, a barrister?—Yes.

3113. And you are Treasurer of the Proportional Representation Society?—I am, and I was the draftsman for the Society of the Municipal Representation Bill.

E 1090.

3114. And you have followed the evidence which has been given before this Commission?—To a certain extent, not so very closely; but I have had an opportunity of considering in particular Lord Eversley's memorandum and the memorandum of Mr. Gordon.

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[Continued.]

I have also read Mr. Renwick Seager's evidence and Mr. Boraston's evidence.

3115. With reference to Lord Eversley's evidence, you wish to make some observations?—I have gone through that evidence, and there are one or two things that I should like to say about it. In the first place I would like to take the memorandum as printed which was submitted by Lord Eversley. I do not, of course, attempt to deal with the historical part of it, that is out of my province; but with regard to the detailed criticism of the actual working of the system, there are a few things I should like to say. Lord Eversley on page 4 of his memorandum states, in defence of the present system of election, that it is extremely unlikely that the minority of the whole voters would under the system of one-member districts return a majority of members; he says, I think, further, that he does not believe that such a case has occurred in the past; and he adds that it is just as likely to occur, if not more so, under a system of five- or seven-membered constituencies such as that proposed by the Proportional Representation Society. As to that, I believe it is not disputed that in 1874 a minority of electors did actually return a majority of members. That can be verified by the official returns. It has been stated long ago in Lord Avebury's book, and I have never heard it contradicted.

3116. Is it not in fact largely dependent upon the way in which the uncontested seats are counted?—I do not think so as to the 1874 election; but I should not like to be positive as to that.* With regard to the 1886 election, Lord Courtney has stated in evidence that the event happened in that year. As to that, the statistician who compiled the figures on which Lord Courtney relied is Mr. Rooke Corbett of Manchester, and no doubt that result does depend on the allowance that you make for the uncontested elections. Those uncontested elections in 1886 were particularly large in Ireland; and the consequence of that is that the allowance that Mr. Corbett makes for Ireland accounts, as I understand, for the discrepancy between the results as stated by Lord Eversley and Lord Courtney based on Mr. Corbett's evidence. I have got here Mr. Corbett's statement of the process which he followed; he says: "It seems to me reasonable to suppose that those changes of public opinion which affected the contested constituencies affected the uncontested constituencies also, and, therefore, in estimating the number of voters in an uncontested constituency I have assumed that the strength of each party varied from one election to another in the same ratio as in the contested constituencies in the same county"; I suppose in some cases that must be read "the adjoining county or counties."

3117. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) It has been said that that is an under-estimate, I think, and that you ought to allow a bigger turnover or a large allowance to the party that carries the uncontested seat; that is a criticism I have seen made on those figures of Mr. Corbett's?—Yes, that is of course a question of opinion, and any opinion I could offer about it would be valueless; but if that criticism was adopted it would strengthen Mr. Corbett's figures, because the uncontested elections in Ireland would carry a large number of votes.

3118. I was talking of England rather than of Ireland. I think you cannot regard Ireland as in *pari materia* with England—it is so different.

3119. (Chairman.) But whatever calculation you take, your opinion is that minorities do not receive their proper representation?—The minority plainly does not. Occasionally it happens that the majority do not get the majority of representation to which they are entitled. The anomalous result in 1886 which is alleged to have been arrived at was certainly due to the Irish elections. Ireland being part of the United Kingdom, you have to take it in, and I do not see on

what system you can exclude Ireland in your figures in arriving at your results. Perhaps I might point out in this connection that I think you have had evidence from Mr. Parker Smith, who states, on the mathematical question, that when the opinion of the country is divided into two political parties which are nearly equal, then the probability is that when the supporters of these two parties are in the proportion of A to B, the members returned will be in the proportion of A² to B². If one tests that by the elections in Great Britain, that is not quite so. The proportions—I have got some figures here—are not so disproportionate as A² to B²; that is to say, the majority does not get quite such a large over-representation as those figures suggest. It seems to me that all these merely mathematical statements must be taken with a certain qualification, because they are always liable to be falsified by the fact that you get voters of particular opinions concentrated in particular districts. I speak not as a mathematician, because I am not a mathematician, but I understand that the mathematical element must go upon the basis that you are dealing with homogeneous things, and when you get constituencies which vary in the nature of the political opinion, which is mainly aggregated there, all those purely mathematical questions are, as it were, thrown out of gear. For instance, in England there is always, from the party point of view, an unnecessary concentration of Liberal votes in Wales; you might, I imagine, spare the overplus of Liberal votes in Wales and yet retain your majority in Wales and affect constituencies in England. Similarly in the home counties, I should think the concentration applies the other way. I should like to say generally with regard to those figures, that even if the A² to B² rule did hold good as to Great Britain (I do not think it does), when you have added Ireland, the postulate of even distribution of parties no longer applies, and the security against the return of a majority of members by a minority of voters is greatly diminished.

3120. The rule might hold good for the whole of Great Britain, but if you take in Ireland you must admit that it puts the rule out?—If you take in Ireland your security for any definite correspondence between voters and members is greatly weakened. I do not think it holds good—it plainly does not, tested by previous results, at all events—for Great Britain, though no doubt normally the majority of votes is exaggerated by the majority of members. But to come back to Lord Eversley's criticism, I think he said that this unjust result was just as likely to occur in a system of constituencies returning several members. I submit that in theory to begin with that cannot be true, for this reason—that in each of the larger constituencies all the seats except the last are, as a general rule, allotted to members who each represents a block of electors which we call the quota; they have got to get the quota. Then you come down to the last seat, and it is only the last seat, as a general rule, the allotment of which is determined by a bare majority of the electors hitherto unrepresented; you have got solid blocks up to then; it is only when you come to the last seat that a bare majority carries the day. In other words, it is only the last seat which goes according to the present system as if you were fighting a single-member constituency; and it is only with reference to the last seat that you get an unrepresented minority, because up till then you have got it that each member is returned by a quota of people who are behind him; it is not until you get to the allotment of the last seat that you find necessarily a certain proportion of people left who are not or may not be represented.

3121. That largely depends, does it not, upon whether the electors have filled in their third and fourth preferences?—I am not quite sure that I follow the question.

3122. Does not the fact whether the last member to be elected does or does not obtain a quota, largely depend upon whether the electors have used or have not used their preferences?—Yes: in many cases of course the last member elected equally will have a quota, but still there will be even after that a certain number less than the quota who will not have

* Note by Witness.—On a reference to Lord Avebury's book I see that the accuracy of the total result in 1874 is a question of the manner in which uncontested seats are counted. But all parties agree that, taking the contested seats only, in that year a minority of electors returned a majority of members.

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[Continued.]

got representation; and that is quite independent of the fact of how many preferences have been expressed. In a five-member constituency your quota is one-sixth plus one, and assuming that all your five members elected get each a quota, the result will be that you have represented accurately five-sixths plus five of the electors; therefore it may be that one-sixth minus five will remain unrepresented. They are of course represented in the sense that after the election the majority of them will be in general accord with some one or more of the five members already elected; but if they were a small totally independent group they would not be represented. But the point is this: that the field of error in the proportional system seems to me to be narrowed down, the field of possible non-representation is narrowed down, to the lowest point, and therefore the chance of an inaccurate representation of the whole body of electors is very much diminished. I think you can test the difference between the two systems by taking the extreme case which Lord Eversley mentions on page seven of his Memorandum. He points out that on a system of single-member constituencies if the majorities and minorities were evenly spread all over the country, then the majority would have more seats than it is strictly entitled to; in fact it would in the extreme case have all the seats. In that extreme case the advantage of proportional representation is apparent, because the proportional system secures proper representation for the minorities in a case of that kind. For instance, in Wales under the present system the Liberals monopolise the representation. Under the five-member constituency system they would get an additional advantage in each constituency, but they would not monopolise the representation. These are perhaps to some extent theoretical considerations. I am not a mathematician and I do not want to lay too much stress upon them. I think the best answer to the suggestion that the proportional system may produce errors similar to those under the single-member system is, the results actually arrived at in different countries; and I should like to call attention to the figures. I have three sets of figures—the figures for the Belgian election in 1908, the Finnish election in 1909, and the Tasmanian election in 1909. [The witness put in the figures as follows:—]

BELGIAN ELECTIONS, 1908.

Parties.	Votes obtained.	Seats actually obtained.	Seats in proportion to Votes.
Catholics	515,926	37	36
Liberals and Socialists	633,258	43	44*
Christian Democrats	16,095	1	1

FINLAND ELECTIONS, 1909.

Parties.	Votes obtained.	Seats actually obtained.	Seats in proportion to Votes.
Socialists	336,659	84	80
Old Finns	198,635	48	47
Young Finns	121,006	28	29
Swedish Nationalists	104,107	25	25
Agrarians	56,649	13	13
Religious Labourers	23,120	2	6

TASMANIAN ELECTIONS, 1909.

Parties.	Votes obtained.	Seats actually obtained.	Seats in proportion to Votes.
Labour Party	18,802	12	11·7
Non-Socialists	29,286	18	18·3

* The figures for Liberals and Socialists are given together because in several constituencies these parties presented a common list.

3123. In this connection, do you consider that the Belgian and Finnish methods are analogous to the scheme of the Proportional Representation Society?—They are analogous; they are not identical, of course.

3124. Do you think that deductions from them are a fair comparison?—Yes, I think so, for this purpose. It will be observed, for instance, in the Belgian elections that the Catholics or Conservatives obtained 515,926 votes and got 37 seats; in strict proportion they ought to have got 36—that of course is very near. The Liberals and Socialists, who are treated together, because in several constituencies they were put forward in one list, obtained 633,258 votes, and they got 43 seats; they ought to have got 44. The Christian Democrats, a small independent party, got a little over 16,000 votes; they ought to have got one seat, and did actually get one seat. In Finland, the Socialists were the largest single party, they got 336,659 votes; they got 84 seats, they ought to have got 80 seats; and so down, through the Old Finns, who actually got 48 seats, and should have got 47; the Young Finns, who got 28 seats, and should have got 29; the Swedes, who got 25 seats, and should have got 25; the Agrarians, who got 13 seats, and should have had 13; and a small party called, called the Religious Labourers, with 23,000 votes, who actually got two seats, and should have had six. That is, perhaps, interesting, because it shows that it is the smallest party which, equally under this system as under the present system, is at a slight disadvantage, because if they are widely scattered and do not get the quota, or the equivalent of the quota, in any one constituency, you may have several small parties which do not get representation.

3125. Do you consider that they are under a less disadvantage than they would be under the present system?—Obviously.

3126. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) What is the size of the Finnish constituencies?—I think I am right in saying that in one case the constituency returned as many as 23 members. I heard a speech made yesterday afternoon.

3127. I think it is 22.

3128. (Lord Loches.) Is that the Helsingfors district?—Yes. The Nyland district which includes Helsingfors.

3129. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) We were shown the voting papers?—Yes, I believe that one constituency in the north, which is a very thinly populated district, returned only one member.

3130. The reason why I ask the question is that it looks as though a very small party, widely scattered, would still suffer, though to a less extent, under the proportional system?—That is so. I agree that a very small party, widely scattered, would certainly suffer.

3131. And the smaller the constituency the more it suffers—the smaller the number of members in the constituency?—Yes, the larger the number of members per constituency the more likely it is to get accurate representation. There is a certain limit set by practical considerations to the indefinite extension of constituencies.

3132. (Chairman.) And what are the results of the Tasmanian elections?—I understand that Tasmania at the present time is divided substantially between the Labour party and their opponents, called the Non-Socialists. The Labour party at the last elections polled 18,802 votes and got 12 seats, and their strict proportion would have been 11·7. The Non-Socialists polled 29,286 votes, and they got 18 seats; their strict proportion would have been 18·3. Those figures are not official, but they are given by Professor Nanson of Melbourne, one of the foremost advocates of proportional representation in Australia, and I think they may be taken as accurate.

3133. As the result of the Tasmanian election, has the effect of proportional representation been to reduce it to a two-party system, as you suggest in your figures?—Upon that point I cannot speak with first-hand knowledge of Tasmania. I understand that you have had the Agent-General before you. I imagine that where there is any one large party with a very definite programme which rouses considerable hostility, as perhaps the Labour party's programme may do, it will necessarily be accompanied by a concentration of

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[Continued.]

people who are opposed to it, and that of course will result in the two-party system. From my own point of view it always seems to me that the two-party system is an essential result of human nature acting in politics. I have always thought that its supporters have not sufficient faith in it when they suggest that by introducing a really democratic system of representation you are going to do away with it. It may be to some extent modified, but in its essence I believe it goes to the bottom of human nature and that it will be persistent in any country, at any rate in any country such as ours, which has been used to Parliamentary government.

3134. Now, taking into consideration Parliament not only as a legislative body, but as an executive body as well, do you anticipate any danger from the majority becoming small?—I do not. I think that the traditions of English life and the general character of English human nature, and even the political tradition in this country, would always tend to the carrying on of parliamentary government by a stable executive, which will be rendered not less stable by the fact that you have an accurate representation. If I may say so, I think, as a matter of common sense, looking at the world at the present time, one finds the group system existing in countries which have got single-member districts, both in Germany, in France, and in Italy. I am inclined to say, at any rate with regard to Germany, that that is the result of the fact that the Reichstag does not control the Executive. With regard to France, it is only, I think I am right in saying, since the introduction of the Third Republic that they have got a parliamentary executive, and they have not, I think, yet adapted their institutions thoroughly to the changed conditions. Similarly, in Italy they have not the tradition of a parliamentary executive that we have had in England for so long. To return to the correspondence of members with possibilities of errors, if you compare the figures that I have given with the results under the single-member-constituency system, whether you use the second ballot or you do not, in the United Kingdom, Australia, the German empire, and France, the superiority of the proportional system in this respect is, I think, manifest. I have not got the figures for England, France, and Germany, but I understand that you have already got them. They are easily accessible. To revert to Lord Eversley's memorandum, I think his criticisms on this point are a little inconsistent; because, having said that there is no greater security under the proportional system for a correspondence of a majority of votes with a majority of members, he goes on to urge what I may perhaps without disrespect say is the usual argument, that a majority of members proportionate to a majority of voters is too small for carrying on the business of the House of Commons. But if proportional representation is less likely than the present system to give accurate results, I think there is very little force in that criticism. That is not a criticism which lies in the mouth of a man who admits that the proportional system gives more accurate results; because you cannot say at one and the same time that it gives less accurate results, and say that your majority will be so small that you will not be able to carry on the government. After that, Lord Eversley adds some remarks which I think really tell strongly against the present system. He says that the opinion of the country is hardly exhibited in its full force by the votes on either side given at a general election, and he cites the elections of 1874, 1880, 1886, and 1890; he says, I think, that in all those cases the reaction against the then government was very much stronger than the votes actually showed. Of course that is obviously a matter of opinion, about which people may differ; but if that is true, it is a very serious criticism of the present method of election, because it means that as the electors only had two alternative candidates from which to choose, at any rate till 1906 (and the third alternative then was probably in the direction of greater extremity rather than a more moderate course), the choice which the elector made was not the true expression of his views. In other words, according to Lord Eversley, there is a large body of moderate opinion which is voiceless in the

House of Commons; because the substance of what he says is that though people disapprove of the government and really want to be hostile to it, yet party ties are so strong that they would rather vote for their own man when they have only got to choose between him and a member of the opposition, than go right over to the other side. That is really only another way of saying that the choice of the electors is unduly narrowed.

3135. (Mr. J. W. Hills.) Is not Lord Eversley's criticism rather on human nature than on the electoral system? I read him as meaning that a man may change his opinion but will not change his vote; and however many grades of opinion you give him, I think Lord Eversley's criticism still holds good?—He expresses it, of course, as a defence of the present system of elections. I do not wish to be thought to take an unduly idealist view of human nature in this respect, but I think if you give human nature more than two alternative candidates from which to choose, the chances are that it would take advantage of them.

3136. So far as Lord Eversley means that the change in the country is probably greater than the change in actual votes transferred, it is a matter of opinion, of course; but would you not think that there is a good deal to be said for his view?—Yes, I do rather assent to it. From one's own observation, I think one constantly finds people who are dissatisfied with the existing party or the existing Government; at the same time, a man will say, when he sees actually before him the candidate of the other party, "I cannot vote for that man," and he gives his vote to his original party.

3137. (Chairman.) Your next point deals with the actual number of members in various constituencies. I understand that the Proportional Representation Society do not lay down any definite rules on that matter?—Certainly not.

3138. So that Lord Eversley's criticism in that part of his memorandum really falls to the ground?—Yes, I think so. If I might do so, I should like to refer to Lord Eversley's criticism at the bottom of page 7 of his memorandum. He assumes, for the purpose of his criticism, that England has been divided into five-membered constituencies which return two Conservatives, two Liberals, and one Independent member—I am using his own terms for the political parties—and he makes the assertion that a five-membered constituency will, on the main issue, give no verdict. I should like to challenge that proposition altogether. In the first place, it is a suggestion that when a constituency is equally divided between two opinions there is something wrong about having divided representation. I challenge that point of view altogether. I think that if you have a constituency equally divided between two opinions, the best method of representation is to divide the representation between the two opinions. But there is a further criticism. Lord Eversley assumes that the Independent member in that case does not give any views—has no attitude—as to the main question before the electors. I think, if I may say so, that is probably likely to be untrue. Supposing that your so-called Independent member is either an Irish Nationalist or a Labour member (which is the most probable case), surely it is contrary to the plain facts of political life to suggest that in 1886 such a man would not have given an opinion on Home Rule, that in 1906 he would have had nothing to say about the Fiscal question, and that in 1909 he had no views on the Budget. You cannot conceive of such a man standing for a constituency under modern conditions; and, remember, it is a large constituency with 50,000 or 60,000 voters, and he wants something like 10,000 to vote for him. He cannot be entirely independent and say that he takes no attitude on the main question before the electors. He may say that he does not sympathise with either of the great parties altogether, but he must have an attitude on any great burning question of the day.

3139. In this connection do you consider that your plan would enable more independent members to be returned?—Of course, independent members in the strict sense, that is to say, people who have no party ties at all, I do not think would be returned in any

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large numbers. I think that you might occasionally expect that you would get a certain number of men of great national distinction returned.

3140. We have referred to them usually as people of the character of Mr. Harold Cox and Lord Hugh Cecil. Do you think more men like them would be returned?—Yes, I think certainly more men of Lord Hugh Cecil's attitude would be returned. It is difficult to say with regard to Mr. Harold Cox; but I should say certainly that you would get a larger representation of people of that kind. If I may go on to Lord Eversley's figures, he has given some very interesting detailed figures showing how things would work out. In the first place, it is to be observed that he assumes a constituency with 30,000 voters returning five members. In practice a five-membered constituency would probably have from 50,000 to 60,000 voters, because from 10,000 to 12,000 on the present basis on the average go to a seat. That does not affect, of course, the value of Lord Eversley's figures, except in so far as the successful organisation of voters, which he suggests would be an evil, would be very much more easily carried out the smaller the number to be dealt with. That is one point I wish to make out of the use of, quite unintentionally, unduly small numbers as illustrating the proportional system. Lord Eversley at the beginning of his observations says that the scheme is framed so as to give an initial advantage to an independent candidate, because he will secure his return, he says, "if he obtains one-sixth of the votes plus one, whereas he is only entitled to be returned according to mathematical proportion if he gets one-fifth of the votes." It would be equally reasonable to say that on the present system a member who is to represent a whole constituency is only to be returned if he gets the whole of the votes. The present system may disfranchise a majority of the electors minus two of that constituency; the proportional system may disfranchise an infinitely smaller proportion, varying of course with the size of the constituency. Then Lord Eversley goes on; he gives four imaginary instances where either an independent candidate is elected with less than a quota of votes, or where a larger party gets one member less than a smaller party. Now the first and last, the first and fourth of those instances, are cases where four quotas of electors in a five-membered constituency, that is to say, $\frac{4}{5}$ ths + 4, have already got their true representation, and the only question remaining is the allotment of the last seat; you will find that that is so if you look at his evidence—that in each case there are four members elected with a quota; consequently what you have to do is, you have to consider rather less than $\frac{4}{5}$ ths of the constituency, and you have to consider whom they are to choose for their member. In Lord Eversley's instances there are three or four competitors for that seat, and in each case the successful competitor is the man who has behind him the largest body of supporters; that is to say, the man who would succeed on the present system (as the Attercliffe result showed), because Lord Eversley assumes throughout that no use is made of the transferable vote so far as this last seat is concerned. For example, in his first instance he gives the Conservative with 2,850 votes, the Liberal with 3,396 votes, and the Independent with 3,750 votes, and he claims against the system that the Independent man gets the seat. Well, that is exactly the result which would follow on the present system where you have got one seat to go between three parties. And Lord Eversley assumes that no use is made of the transferable vote in this election. If the Conservative supporters had chosen to prefer the Liberal to the Independent, or *vice versa*, they could influence the result. Similarly, with regard to his fourth instance, there you have two Independents, one with 3,000 votes and the other with 2,996 votes, one Conservative with 2,600 votes, and one Liberal with 2,400 votes. Well, the highest Independent, exactly like Attercliffe, gets the seat. But really Lord Eversley's complaint against the proportional system as to this is, as to the allotment of the last seat, that it produces the same result as the present system, which he himself supports. That is his complaint; and it

surely is not fair to criticise the new system upon the ground that in certain respects it so allots the last seat in a constituency that it reproduces the possible sources of error which exist under the present system. It has narrowed them enormously. Now the second and third of Lord Eversley's instances are cases where the party with fewer votes gets more representation. It is quite true that this may happen in cases which are very rare in practice. We never claim that our system is absolutely perfect; you cannot devise, I think I am right in saying, the absolutely perfect system; but a result of that kind only occurs when a full use is not made of the transferable votes. For instance, in Lord Eversley's second instance you have got the Conservative with 4,150 votes, the Liberal with 3,398 votes, and the Independent with 3,750 votes. You assume that of the 3,398 supporters of the Liberal not even 400 (or just over 400) display no preference for the Independent candidate, say, over the Conservative. If they did, they would bring up the Independent candidate's poll to an excess over the Conservative, and that would destroy the supposed injustice of the proportional system. The transferable vote has only to be used, and used by a very small proportion of the voters in that respect, to destroy the injustice of the larger party getting a smaller number of representatives. The same criticism applies to the third instance, that they do not use the transferable vote. If they chose to use the transferable vote that anomaly would disappear. You see, if quite a small proportion, namely, 401, to be accurate, out of the 3,398 displayed a preference for the Independent over the Conservative, they would put the Independent in, and the anomaly would not exist. In the vast majority of cases no doubt that result would be the one that would actually happen. Then as to the great practical difficulties of the scheme, Lord Eversley seems to think that you will not be able to get candidates to stand in cases where their chances of election are remote. I do not think that is the present experience in this country; I cannot speak with very direct knowledge, of course, but I have certainly known many cases in which people have stood for quite hopeless seats. And then as to whether party organisers will advise their supporters to mark a definite order of preference as between candidates, probably they will do so in some cases and not in others.

3141. You do not recommend that the marking of a preference should be necessary to make the vote valid?—I should be against it. I do not see what right you have got to make a man declare a preference unless he actually feels it, and to penalise him unless he exercises it. I think that a man is entitled to say, "I vote for Mr. A., who is my real representative, and I do not care for any of the other candidates."

3142. So far as the practical difficulties are concerned, I should like to ask you with regard to the independent candidate: Will not the expenses of the independent candidate be very much increased in these large constituencies if he is not standing in connection with anyone else?—I have not any practical knowledge, of course, of electioneering. I should say that in some cases they might be increased; in other cases I do not think they would be. I should think they might even be diminished. Of course, if an independent candidate has to go down to a large constituency where he is not known at all, and has to make himself known, and has to, as it were, pick out his supporters all over a large town such as Manchester or Birmingham, I can quite understand that his expenses might be higher than, say, those of a man who is fighting a single-membered constituency under the present system. But supposing he is well known in the country as the representative of certain definite views, and supposing that he goes down to a part of the country where those views (as would be probable) have already a considerable support, then I think he could work his large constituency probably much more cheaply than a single-membered constituency at the present time, because his name would be an attraction and people who were sympathetic would vote for him naturally without the beating up and the objectionable details of canvassing which are necessary to induce indifferent or apathetic electors to go to the poll.

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[Continued.]

3143. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) It has been suggested that, apart from personal canvassing, the mere necessary expenses in postcards and placards would be a very serious item if you increase the size of the constituency?—I should be disposed to assent to that with regard to the first class of candidate that I mentioned, who goes down to a place and has to make himself known; but with regard to the class of candidate who is already well known, he might, I think, expect to get on without the same amount of expense, without anything like a proportionate expense as to postcards and placards and so on. For instance, might I illustrate what I am saying by a suggestion as to the City of London? I can well understand that if a candidate for the City was, let us say, already well known as a great banker, as a great financier, or a great merchant in some form or other, it would not be necessary for him to placard the city and send out postcards in the same way as a less well known candidate would find it necessary to do.

3144. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) I think you have taken an exceptional constituency in the City, have you not?—No doubt the City is a constituency *sui generis*.

3145. I think organisers would tell you that what brings votes is the personal solicitation of the candidate?—No doubt that is so with regard to the votes of the less reflective part of the population. The kind of constituency that I have got in my mind and the kind of candidate is the case of a man who is identified with some particular movement of national interest who goes down to a part of the country which I may call the headquarters of that movement. There I do not think his expenses should be at all high. I should think they ought to be less than those of an ordinary man who has to fight a closely contested constituency.

3146. Are you not taking there a man who is not an independent candidate, but a man who stands at the wing of one of the big parties? A man of that sort would be adopted by one of the parties and put on the party list for that particular place, would he not?—He might or he might not. Your question, if I may say so, indicates a view to which I am myself inclined; that is to say, that you would find in practice that the number of men who stood entirely independent of any party would probably be small. My own view is that the introduction of the proportional system will make for considerably greater freedom inside the party; that you will not be able to get rid of your party of certain national elements, and people of national standing who attract a certain amount of support and will be valuable to you. It is a necessary correlative of that, that you must give them greater freedom; you must have greater liberty within the party itself. It is perhaps rather invidious to mention individuals, but I should have thought it possible that you could conceive of Mr. Harold Cox, whose name has been mentioned, standing for, let us say, Manchester. His views there would be very well known. It might be that he would feel so strongly on certain topics that he would prefer not to stand as identified with the Liberal Party, but I should have thought that his views were so well known in Manchester, and there might be such a section in Manchester as would rally to the well-known views that he holds, that his election expenses would be smaller than those that he has to face at the present time. But all this to some extent is speculation. I am not an electioneering expert.

3147. (*Chairman.*) One practical aspect of the matter must be dealt with: how would it tell on by-elections, when the whole constituency would have to be polled, would it not?—There have been two suggestions of course as to by-elections. I do not understand that the Proportional Representation Society have expressed any decided view for one rather than the other. The two suggestions are either a poll of the whole constituency, or to take the plan which I think Mr. Joseph King mentioned to the Commission; that is to say, to preserve, not necessarily the existing, but to preserve sub-divisions of a constituency for the purposes of by-elections, and let each candidate as he is chosen in order, as he is elected on the proportional system, declare his option for one of those divisions, and let him be considered as the

member for that division for by-election purposes, and if a by-election becomes necessary, poll that division. Either of those plans, I think, would be perfectly feasible.

3148. Are you in a position to say, on behalf of the Proportional Representation Society, whether it would advocate such a plan?—I think I might go so far as to say that the Proportional Representation Society would have no objection whatever to that plan, and, indeed, I think the Proportional Representation Society would certainly accept it. It is not, of course, for them to accept it or reject it, but I should say that they would acquiesce in any solution of the by-election difficulty. I think if you did away with the necessity of securing re-election on taking office you would diminish the number of by-elections; and I am also inclined to think that the importance of by-elections under the proportional system will be less than it is under the present system. There is just one other remark of Lord Eversley to which I should like to call attention—it is outside his memorandum. At question 2203 of his evidence he said that he does not think that the rise of a third party has altered the situation. I do not know whether, on consideration, he would adhere to that view. It appears to me quite obvious that it revolutionises the situation, because it makes the present system open to the criticism that is usually made against the Proportional system, namely, that no single party can obtain any strong majority. Obviously, under the existing system, when you have got three parties standing for a single seat, it is of course familiar to the Commission that very great anomalies may result.

3149. You have also, I think, been through Mr. Gordon's evidence?—I have gone through Mr. Gordon's memorandum; it includes an unpublished letter that he sent to the "Spectator." He says in that letter, in the first place, that the list of candidates proposed at the 1908 illustrative election which the Proportional Representation Society held, made minority representation a foregone conclusion; and, secondly, he says that it cannot be proved by any test conducted under these conditions that the Society's scheme would, under the conditions of actual practice, lead to proportional representation. I have found it very difficult to understand that argument. At any election on a proportional system there will be several seats in one constituency, and there will be several candidates for those seats. The candidates will represent different parties, no doubt, and the result will not be merely minority representation (Mr. Gordon seems to fall into the usual error of supposing that we are asking for minority representation alone), but a representation of the constituency which is as accurate as practical conditions will allow. In the illustrative election, of course, we had to choose as candidates men whose political opinions were well known; one could not use the names of people whose views were not well known; and some of them were of more eminence than others. In a real election, of course, the candidates will have to make themselves and their opinions known to the electors, but I really fail to see how that difference vitiates the results of the illustrative election as indicative of what would happen in a real constituency. Then Mr. Gordon went on to criticise the 1906 illustrative election. He states that Mr. Keir Hardie, who was elected in that election—he got the quota on the first vote—would have been elected under our existing arrangements. That is hardly so. The Labour voters in that election numbered 3,572 out of 12,398.

3150. You are speaking of those who gave their first vote Mr. Hardie?—I think not. I think that includes people who voted for other Labour candidates.

3151. You think that is the total Labour vote?—Yes, I think so.* That is a little over one-fourth. Under our existing arrangements the Labour voters would have been distributed in five constituencies; and it is quite possible—it is probable, that in none of them would they have had a majority; consequently it

* I have referred to the figures of the 1906 election, and find that my memory was accurate on this point.—J. F. W.]

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[Continued.]

certainly is not true to say that under our existing arrangements Mr. Keir Hardie would have been elected. It is entirely a question of chance. It depends upon the geographical distribution of the voters. Then Mr. Gordon went on to object that that election did not result in the election of any candidates who "really represented compact minorities," and he instances Lord Hugh Cecil, who was not elected, Sir Thomas Whittaker and Mr. Philip Snowden, who also were not elected. As to Mr. Philip Snowden, of course his supporters had already a representative whose views would concur with their own, in Mr. Keir Hardie. Then, as to the supporters of Lord Hugh Cecil and Sir Thomas Whittaker, if you are to consider them as entirely distinct from both the Government and the Opposition, which is a highly doubtful point, their supporters did not amount to that fraction of the constituency which on the scheme is entitled to representation. The remainder of Mr. Gordon's memorandum, apart from certain positive proposals, contains an objection to the operations subsequent to the first count under the proportional system, on the ground that the labour and expense involved are excessive. He arrives at that conclusion because in 1908 the only substantial result of those operations was to substitute the name of Mr. Burt for that of Mr. Henderson among the first five elected candidates. That is a conclusion from a single instance; and even if one were to regard that single instance alone, it seems to me a strong thing to say that it is not worth rather more than four hours' labour by the returning officer and his staff to determine whether a member of one party or another is to have a seat in the House of Commons. I know of no method by which you can measure the comparative value of labour and expense with regard to the accuracy of the results, but I certainly should not have thought that four hours was too much to ascertain the accurate distribution of seats between two parties.

3152. There is a difference, is there not, between the method which the Proportional Representation Society recommend and that adopted in Tasmania?—Yes, what the Proportional Representation Society recommends, in the sense of what is in the Municipal Representation Bill, represents the Tasmanian Bill at an earlier stage; it does not represent the present Tasmanian Act. The present Tasmanian Act represents the most scientific mathematical accuracy, so far as I know, attainable. The Proportional Representation Society would of course gladly welcome that additional accuracy, but they were doubtful how far it was necessary to adopt that further refinement which is obtained in Tasmania. I understand, however, that the Tasmanian result has been very satisfactory and that they have had no difficulty.

3153. In view of that result, that the working of the Act is satisfactory, would your Society be prepared to adopt the method in use there?—Certainly, if it was to recommend itself to the British public as a whole. The objection of course from a popular point of view is that it is more intricate, and consequently a little more difficult to explain.

3154. On the other hand, it removes largely the element of chance?—It absolutely removes of course the faint minimum element of chance which persists—but is so small that it is not worth considering from the practical point of view—in the original Tasmanian system.

3155. But from the popular point of view you admit that it is a serious drawback?—No, I do not think it is; I think the argument of chance will have to be used very unscrupulously to affect a popular audience in that way. I may say that in the Transvaal, in their Municipal Representation Bill for Pretoria and Johannesburg, they have adopted our Municipal Representation Bill; they do not think the further refinement is necessary. It is a refinement. You know the nature of it, of course?

3156. Yes?—They do not seem to have thought it necessary. It is a question of tactics entirely, and I should have been inclined to agree with them; I should have been inclined to think that you could make a popular audience understand the old Tasmanian system rather more readily than the new refined Tasmanian

system. That is a mere personal expression of opinion. If I may go back to Mr. Gordon's evidence, he admits that the operation attained its end, and did produce as close an approximation as possible to proportional representation in the result. But then he says that this was the outcome of a happy accident. In doing that, of course, he treats as accidental the deliberate expression of the voters' preferences. If the voters had been otherwise minded, the result would have been different. We all agree to that. That is not to say that the result was accidental. Then he indulges in various speculations, as to whether in certain events the organisers of one party would have advised their followers to support the smaller party rather than a stronger party opposed to them. Of course, I cannot go into that. One does not know. Then Mr. Gordon makes a general criticism to the effect that the proportional system would put greater power into the hands of party organisers and party managers. I should like to concede at once that the system of the single transferable vote does not destroy the advantages which come from a strict party discipline and strict cohesion; it reduces them, if I may say so, to their proper dimensions, and makes it quite impossible for party organisers to exclude a candidate whom a sufficient body of electors wish to see returned. That is to say, if a man has a quota behind him he must be elected, and he must be elected whatever the party organisers do. But Mr. Gordon shows very clearly that for the supporters of a party to number in order of preference—the exact order is generally immaterial—all the candidates of their own party, before they pass on to the candidates of any other party, gives an advantage to the party in question in the sense that it prevents the party from being deprived of its fair share of representation. In the 1908 illustrative election the large number of voters who gave their first and second preferences for Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George and then went over and gave their third preference to a Labour candidate, naturally tended to weaken the Liberal Party at the expense of the Labour Party—to make it less likely that the Liberal Party would get the third seat. That is perfectly true. But to go on and say that the system enables the "mere election manager," using Mr. Gordon's expression, to "increase" by upwards of 50 per cent. the voting efficiency of "his party" seems to me an undue appreciation of the real political value of party cohesion, and a great exaggeration, if I may say so, of the results which follow legitimately from a well-managed organisation. The best answer really to the argument that proportional representation would increase the power of party managers, to my mind is the fact that all the world over the party managers have always been against it. They are astute people who understand their own business.

3157. Are they not against it because it would greatly increase their labours?—I do not think I should like to impute that motive to them. I think they are against it because it would decrease their power. I must say that I think that is a more natural attitude for them to assume.

3158. (*Sir Courtenay Ilbert.*) Might one not say that they object to it because they work now under a system which they know how to work, and they would have to work under another system that they do not know how to work?—That is a true observation; but I should like to say here, speaking for myself, that I quite recognise that party discipline and party cohesion represent valuable political work which is legitimately entitled to a certain advantage, and I do not think the proportional system destroys the valuable results of those qualities, which, properly exercised, are perfectly good qualities and perfectly valuable qualities. And it is curious to observe that Mr. Gordon's view of the Proportional Society's proposals is really diametrically opposed to Lord Eversley's view. He says that they would tend more to the advantage of the majority than of the minority; he says that in answer to Question 2618; but Lord Eversley says on page 6 of his memorandum that it would weaken the majority and give a very undue advantage to cliques and sections. Those two criticisms cannot both be true; they are mutually

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[Continued.]

opposed. Our answer is that so far as possible within practical conditions, they would give their due share to both majorities and minorities.

3159. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) I think you said that you expected the majority's representatives would be smaller under the proportional system?—In the House of Commons, yes, it certainly would be smaller than under the present system.

3160. But you thought that in spite of that the executive would still be stable?—Yes, I think so.

3161. I do not quite follow that. Do you think that the stability of the executive is independent of the size of the majority which supports it?—Not totally independent of it. At the same time I think that the stability which results from a large majority is very greatly exaggerated in current political discussion.

3162. I quite agree; but is it not the usual experience in England, that either a very small majority or a very large majority is unstable?—I do not think that was true of Lord Palmerston's majority at the end of the 'fifties and the early part of the 'sixties. I think he governed for a long time with a very small majority. My impression is that these very large majorities are to some extent the growth of recent years.

3163. But I am not sure that your analogy as far back as the 'fifties is applicable to the present time, bearing in mind the change of the electorate in 1868?—In discussing this question, of course one must not forget that certain new conditions to some extent will have been introduced by the proportional system. One cannot argue quite directly from the House of Commons as at present constituted to the House of Commons as it might exist under the proportional system. I think, for instance, that the convention or understanding which at present exists by which a Government is, I will not say forced, but is pushed, to consider an adverse division in the House of Commons, however obtained, as equivalent to a vote of no confidence, will be found to be weakened under the proportional system. It is a convention, of course, which, like all unwritten conventions, has a very floating and uncertain margin.

3164. And is entirely of modern times?—I believe that is so.

3165. I do not think it rests, does it, on the electoral system?—No, but I think the assumption that a large majority is a necessity for Government, largely depends upon the existence, or supposed existence, of the necessity for the Government having at every moment in the House of Commons a majority in their favour even on quite minor questions.

3166. Do you think that you could abolish it by a change in the system? Does it not rest upon some more fundamental alteration that has come over our political life?—I suppose it is because it is looked upon as an indication of the fact that the Government has lost the confidence of the House of Commons, that even a small minor defeat often leads to the resignation of the Government.

3167. What I was leading up to is, that in spite of a small majority, we have here such a tradition of parliamentary government that it would tend to give stability to the executive. I do not quite follow on what the tradition exists, except on the two-party system. Are you not arguing in a circle there?—No; what I meant to say was that English politicians have a thorough understanding of the fact that the executive depends upon Parliament, and therefore they are not likely, lightly and inconsiderately on minor issues, to refuse their confidence to a Government which upon the whole merits their support. I think you are not likely, for instance, to get the more impulsive decisions of some of the foreign chambers which have not got that sense of responsibility which comes from the fact that your executive Government for the time being depend upon the control of the majority of the representatives in the House of Commons.

3168. Is not the real responsibility caused by the fact that the party that turns out the Government has to take the responsibility itself?—No doubt that is one of the elements, and, no doubt, under the proportional system that element would exist and have its full play.

3169. Just one more question about the independent member. You criticise Lord Eversley's statement, that if a town had two members of each party and one independent member, the independent member would represent nobody?—I think what Lord Eversley said was that it would have given no verdict on the main issue.

3170. I suppose it might happen, might it not, that it might get somebody who was entirely a temperance advocate, or entirely an anti-vivisection advocate, or an advocate of some more or less side issue of that sort?—Of course one cannot say that that is impossible. My own view is that it would be impossible for a temperance advocate or an anti-vivisection advocate to carry the election in a great town when there was some burning question and he did not pronounce himself upon it. I do not think that in practice it would be at all likely to occur.

3171. It is a criticism that is made on your system, is it not?—It is a criticism that is made on the proportional system.

3172. Do not you think that at times when there was no big question, like free trade or something of that sort, before the electors it might very well happen that sectional issues would play a large part?—No doubt sectional issues might play a considerable part, but I think it is very unlikely that on the main questions before the electorate, which after all in the end you see in another form come to the support of the Government or opposition to the Government, a man would be able successfully to stand in one of these large constituencies and get the quota unless he had declared his view. I might perhaps call attention to this point: that the quota under the proportional system is a considerably larger thing than the majority in a single-member constituency. If you have got a single-member constituency, and if your average of electors to members is 10,000 to 12,000, then, of course, you can return a member by, say, 5,001 votes; but in a proportional-system constituency, given the same proportion of voters to members, roughly 10,000 to 12,000, in order to return a member you have to poll a quota, which in that case would be the necessary fraction plus one. If it was a five-member constituency, it would be a sixth of 60,000 plus one, which is larger, of course, than 5,001. I think that people who suggest that we are going to give undue importance to cliques and sections, often do not really realise the fact that the quota is larger than a snap majority in a small single-member constituency.

3173. Some supporters of the system have welcomed that fact. Lord Hugh Cecil, for instance, welcomed the fact that there would be a small majority among the two chief parties and a large body of independent members in the House?—Of course that is a question of political speculation.

3174. (*Lord Loches.*) Have you considered whether there would be any danger of the second, third, and fourth preferences being treated more lightly than the first—thrown away, played with, dealt with frivolously?—I do not think so. That is a question, of course, of speculation. I do not think that the Tasmanian experience leads one to that conclusion, and so far as one can judge in the illustrative elections that we have held, people expressed their opinions in what I may call a perfectly rational way.

3175. There has been no anomalous result?—No, I do not think so.

3176. You do not find the first preference given to a man of one party, and the second, third, or fourth preferences given to a man at the extreme of the other party?—I think that practically there was no such instance in the illustrative elections. There may have been one or two cases of that kind. Of course, in an illustrative election of that sort, there will always be a certain number of people who will, if I may be excused the expression, play the fool for the fun of the thing; but the number of people who did that under the illustrative conditions was extremely small, quite a negligible percentage; and, so far as I understand the Tasmanian elections, there has been no tendency to do that. Of course the system will be a new system and people will have to get accustomed to it.

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3177. (*Sir Charles Eliot.*) When Lord Grey gave evidence before the Commission, he suggested that a beginning of proportional representation might be made by giving towns the option of conducting elections by that system. Supposing that option was given, is your Society in a position which would enable it to form an opinion as to whether any towns would avail themselves of it?—Any recommendation of that kind would involve a close study of the conditions of particular towns.

3178. You could not make any kind of forecast?—I do not think that any town would do it. I think that the dominant political party in any one town would be unwilling to allow their town to be made the scene of the experiment, unless there was a corresponding concession with regard to some corresponding town whose political complexion was the other way. I am speaking entirely in the air, of course, but I can see great difficulties.

3179. Then you would be against any such experiment?—I should welcome the experiment. I should be only too glad to see it; but I doubt whether the giving of the option would necessarily lead to any experiment being made.

3180. What form of experiment would you suggest?—I am not quite sure how you understand the term

experiment. Do you mean experiment as applied to an actual political election?

3181. I mean anything else than a wholesale introduction of the system all over the country?—If it were possible I should be only too glad to see one or two towns chosen as areas in which the system could be applied; but of course, having regard to the existing political conditions, it would be necessary to choose the towns very carefully so that you would work no injustice. It was that kind of consideration, of course, which caused the trouble in South Africa: the fact that if you simply took the towns you gave one party an advantage at the expense of another. Fortunately in England that is not so; the political divisions do not run as between town and country. They did in South Africa.

3182. Would you be willing to see the system applied to municipal elections as a preliminary to its application to political elections?—I should be delighted to see it applied to municipal elections. Of course, naturally, the further the system is applied the better pleased one is. The object of the Municipal Bill, of course, was, and is, to allow municipalities to adopt the system, if they wish to do so; and our idea certainly was that in that way we should familiarise the public with the system.

3183. (*Mr. J. W. Hills.*) Your Bill is permissive, is it not?—Yes.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned.

ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE.

PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS OF DISCUSSION.

THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

Redistribution Act of 1885.—Dilke, pp. 91 ff.

DEFECTS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

Misrepresentation of Parties.—Courtney, 6, 7, 107-11, 146-8; Balfour, 506-15; Robertson, 114; Parker Smith, 1237 ff., 1250-62; Gales, 1396-400, 1427; Boraston, 1813-6; Eversley, p. 144; Harcourt, 2705-7; Williams, 3120-4.

Non-representation of Minorities.—Courtney, 140; Balfour, 516, 583; Seager, 837, 877, 941, 961-3, 971-7; Gales, 1401-3; Gibb, 1634-7; Boraston, 1706, 1723-8; Craig, 2255-62; Harcourt, 2705-7.

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Excessive "Swing of the Pendulum."—Parker Smith, 1229; Gales, 1425; Anson, 1523-4; Harcourt, 2790, 2831-40.

Power of the "Balancing Elector."—Parker Smith, 1229, 1264 ff., 1293-4; Hyndman, 2075-7; Grey, 2954, 2978, 2984-8.

Extremists encouraged.—Balfour, 508, 635, 649-51; Anson, 1526, 1598; Boraston, 1710-11; Cecil, 2348-50; Grey, 2950.

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Working in Western Australia.—Dr. Hackett's evidence, 2480 ff.

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In double-member Constituencies.—Seager, 867-73, 943-52, 1001-4; Dundas White, 1028, 1087; Robertson, 1106, 1145.

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